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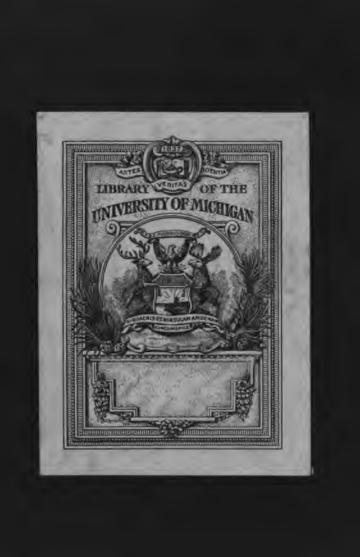
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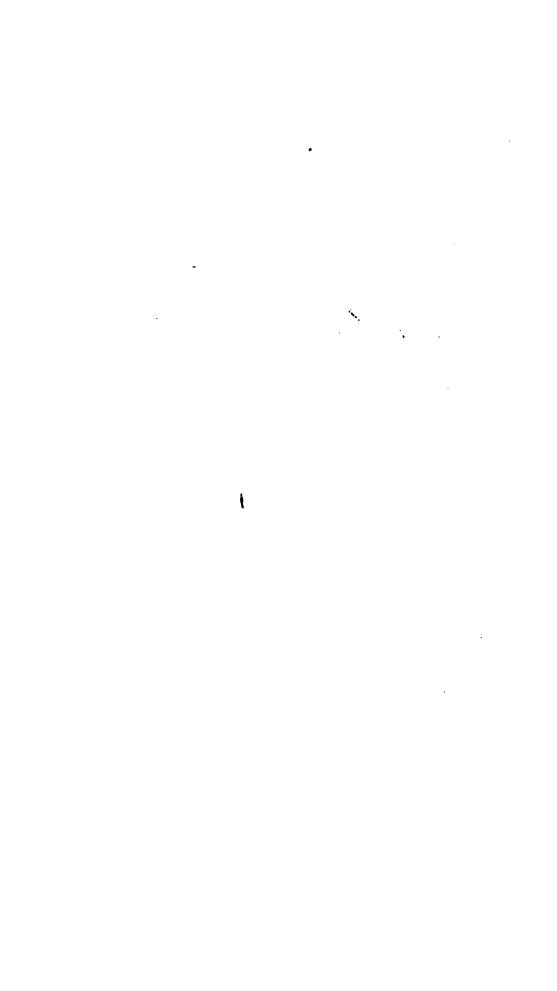
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STUDIES OF IRVING

BY

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER, WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT = GEORGE PALMER PUTNAM

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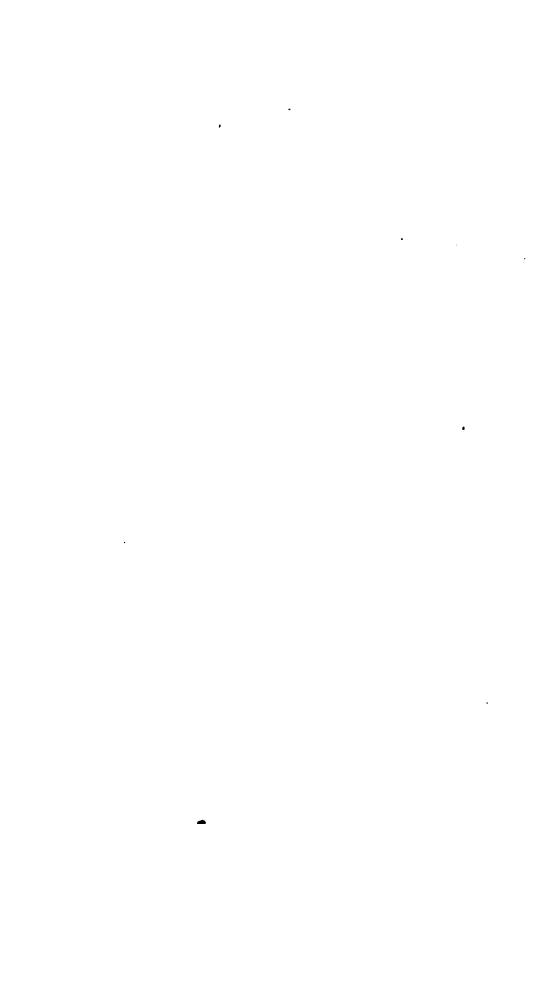
WASHINGTON IRVING

A

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY

PREPARED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE "GEOFFREY CRAYON"
EDITION OF HIS WORKS

BY CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER



WASHINGTON IRVING.

T seems to be proper that a new and noteworthy edition of the works of Washington Irving should be prefaced by a slight sketch of the

author's life, and some estimate of his position as a man of letters. As the admirable "Life and Letters," edited by his nephew, Mr. Pierre M. Irving, will form a part of this edition, it is unnecessary here to indulge in many biographical details; and in the space allotted to me I shall use them only to aid in the estimate that I wish to make of the author.

The twenty years that have elapsed since Irving's death do not at all represent the space that separates our age from his. We seem to have lived a century since the war of the rebellion came to shake and scatter forever our fatuous dream of security and immunity. In two decades we have had the social and political transformation and growth of a hundred years. And in no aspect of our national life is the transition so marked as it is in our literature, in our mental attitude towards

the facts of our own life and the world foreign to us. This change has not been produced alone by our internal evolution; but this has conspired with outward influences to break our sense of separateness as a people, to abate our self-consciousness, and to give our literary expression more freedom, vigor, and a more cosmopolitan tone. The day of experiment may be said to be over; the day of emancipation has come; and in some of the great departments of scholarship, however it may be in literature, America looks no longer to England but to Germany only for its rivals. Irving, in fact, died just on the eve of a new era, an era to which the most active survivors of that preceding it experience infinite difficulty in adjusting themselves, one to which it is safe to say Irving would have remained an uncomprehending stranger.

But this period, expanded as it is into more than a generation of experience by its radical transitions, does not, after all, measure our distance from Irving. He lived far into an age of doubt, with whose spirit, except in the most superficial way of material contact and enjoyment, he was not in sympathy. There is nothing in his biography or his letters to show that during the seventeen years of his residence abroad, and the time of his most fertile mental activity, he apprehended the stir in aspiration and thinking that what may be called the "new learning" was introducing into England from Germany—the first breaking up of the insularness of the English mind—the light of which in the face of Carlyle

soon drew the curious young Emerson across the Atlantic to see.

Already when he returned to the United States in 1832, our most famous and most lauded and loved man of letters, the dawn of change had declared itself here to a sensitive observation. There never was a more sensitive observer born in America than Irving, and that he did not perceive this new effluence, or, if he did perceive it, that he was unaffected by it, must be set down to the fact that he was in his literary constitution the man of another era; and I should also add the minor fact, that his surroundings were in a commercial metropolis, where wealth and fashion, and family traditions based upon success in politics and trade rather than upon moral and literary elements, conspired to make him insensible to what was stirring in New England. If Irving had been born and had lived in Boston, his career would have been very different from what it was-for he was exceedingly impressionable to the nearest influences—but I doubt if it would have been so serviceable to the world. But Irving held himself measurably aloof from the age in which he lived in other respects. I mention this, not by way of criticism—for of the right of the literary artist to take the position of a calm observer merely, I shall have something to say further on-but only as accounting in part for his distance away from us, the separation of his writings from the feverish and unrestful conditions of our own generation.

Of the era of the Emancipation Act and the Reform Bill in England, and of the anti-slavery agitation in America -an era in which were germinating everywhere the powerful forces of which our time has reaped the fruits in revolutions-Irving was almost a passive spectator. This abstention was not from insensibility, it was certainly not from cold-heartedness—he looked at slavery, for instance, exactly as Washington regarded it, -it was not from want of patriotism, for in that respect he was an American of the Americans, and it was not from want of sympathy with what he called "the great cause of the world;" but he obeyed an instinct of his nature in keeping his literature free from what seemed to him temporary excitements. I think he had in mind always the production of something that should be as good for one age as for another, and, whether he succeeded or not, in this he rightly apprehended the true function of literature. His books are separated from us, then, by the absence in them of what the newspapers call "living issues." The next generation, if it recovers the leisurely frame of mind which we have lost, will find in them no note of the reformatory, religious and philosophical ferment, doubt and chaos of his day. If I want at any moment to transport myself into a calm and restful time, I can do it by taking up Irving. And yet, before one can do this with enjoyment, he must discharge himself of the hurry which has seized upon us all; and to bespeak such a calm mental state now, is something like promising to New York the

tranquillity of Egypt when it shall have set up the Alexandrian obelisk amidst surroundings that are the most incongruous that could be devised for it.

I am not now wishing to set up any comparison between the literature of Irving and that of his successors, but only to note the fact that he produced literature in the strict sense in which I use the word; literature being not merely a report of the feeling and sentiment of a time—though it may be that in substance—but having certain other qualities of form and style which make it an enduring thing in the world, and without which it falls into the category of De Quincey's literature of knowledge and not of power.

We are certainly far enough away from Irving to take an impartial view of his literary rank, a view that would have been impossible twenty-five years ago, when we were under the glamour of his immense success. Never did an author reign with more unquestioned sway than he did for about fifty years. There was only here and there a dissentient from the general approbation—John Neal, whose slashing criticism was often not without real insight, so that some of it has come to be accepted as just, and Edgar A. Poe, whose judgment of his contemporaries is always open to the suspicion of petty personal feeling. There was other criticism, there were exceptions to this or that performance, but it was all from the background of a universal recognition of Irving's high place and popularity. No other literary man in America

was so generally admired and loved, and probably no other so widely and permanently influenced the diffused literary tastes of his countrymen. Much of this was due to his opportunity; he appeared at the very beginning of our formative period, and he gave it its direction and tone for many years; and it is very fortunate that this plastic condition was operated on by an influence so pure and salutary. His example and his early success abroad gave a stimulus to literary production in this country, the value of which we are likely to underestimate at this moment; but his greater service was the making of books that were capable of exercising a refining and civilizing power, and yet had in them the elements that made them acceptable to almost everybody, high and low, who could read. I am aware that the quality of a book has little relation to its popularity at a given time—even the contemporary judgment of critics is as often at fault as that of the masses; I am only insisting that Irving's literature had an immense and wholesome influence in this country for fifty years.

Irving's career is a kind of bridge connecting two eras, on which as we walk backward we have a distinct view of amazing social and literary changes. He died in 1859, and his birth was almost coeval with that of the Republic.

He first saw the light—it was on the 3d of April, 1783—only a few months before General Washington entered New York upon its evacuation by the British troops. The New York of now and of then is an epitome of our

national transformation. There are citizens who remember the quaint, dormer-windowed brick house, with a Dutch physiognomy, in William Street, where Irving grew up. It was not pulled down till 1849. At the time of his birth New York was a little town of about 23,000 inhabitants, with the characteristics of a village. Its low and picturesque houses were grouped about the Battery, which was the fashionable quarter, on straggling streets, that were said to have been laid out by the indolent Dutch on cow-paths; shade trees abounded, and the military science of the militia captains on training days was in nothing more conspicuous than in getting their valiant companies around the water-pumps which stood in the middle of the highway, and disorganized the array as much as the taverns on the line of march, though for a different reason. The town was in a sorry condition; it had been half destroyed by fire during the Revolution, and trade did not exist except in the clumsy boats that brought vegetables from Jersey and the islands. The inhabitants were half Dutch and half English, and the social demarkation was maintained, although the English influence predominated. Enterprise almost immediately sprang up on the advent of peace, and the city began its unchecked career. From the beginning almost, and in contrast to all other American towns, it is noticeable that the people had city aspirations, and began to put on a metropolitan air before they were out of village conditions.

Society was organized differently from that of Boston or Philadelphia; it was more cosmopolitan, less neighborly; the New Yorker was known everywhere by certain assumptions. The commercial and trading spirit ruled; there were country gentlemen whose influence was not small in New York, but the city aristocracy were the trading class; the atmosphere was the reverse of intellectual; what literary culture existed was simply a liking for old English books, and some formal acquaintance with the classics, which had little vivifying effect. There are small traces of the scientific spirit which Franklin had planted in Philadelphia, or of the theological activity which prevailed in New England; there was a good substratum of old-fashioned orthodoxy and morality, but society was on the whole free, convivial, pleasureloving; and the gay, somewhat mercurial character of the people has been transmitted to their descendants. This society was not incapable of taking up literature as a fashion; and it was the good fortune of Irving to make literature rather the fashion.

Irving's father was a merchant who had settled in New York in 1763, and been successful until his business was broken up by the war. He was born on Shapinshay, one of the Orkney Islands, of a notable family, whose fortunes had decayed, which traced its descent from William de Irwyn, the armor-bearer of Robert Bruce. His mother, Sarah Sanders, was a native of Falmouth, England, and the granddaughter of a curate. William Irving, who had

taken to the sea for a living, met the beautiful girl when he was a petty officer on a packet plying between Falmouth and New York, and two years after their marriage he quit the sea and made their home in the capital of the New World. Those who think the genius of a large family is apt to be one of the latest comers in it, find their theory confirmed in the case of Washington Irving; he was the eighth son and the youngest of eleven children. The whole family was as remarkable for talent as it was for amiability, integrity, and strong family affection, which had in it something of the Scotch clannishness. The father was a stanch Whig during the war and suffered for his principles, and his wife was a sort of ministering angel to the patriot prisoners confined in the city.

It was from his mother that Irving inherited his gay humor, his love of society, and probably his tendency to letters. She was a woman of fine intellectual grain; a nature full of tenderness, and abundant good sense. In his father flowed a pure strain of Covenanter blood; in business he was the soul of probity; in religion he was severe and godly; and in his household strict and exacting in demanding conformity to his religious creed and practice; although he had tenderness in his nature, it lay far below the surface; in his scheme of life there was no room for triviality or amusement; and he endeavored to bring up his children in the fear of God and the sense of the sinfulness of pleasure. His severe and gloomy

rectitude would have made his home intolerable to the children if it had not been moderated to them by the tenderness and sympathy of their mother; although she conformed in worship to her husband, she did not share his harsh views, and always retained in her heart the leniencies of her Episcopalian training. Indeed the children were repelled from the religion of their father. Ultimately all, except one, became members of the Episcopal Church. Washington, without asserting his independence outwardly, and while still attending the Sunday services and submitting to his father's drill in the Catechism, at an early age made good his escape by slyly stepping into Trinity Church and receiving the rite of confirmation.

It was the mother's idea to name the boy after the victorious leader of the Revolution, and I think the name had an appreciable influence upon his career and the future currency of his work; and the lad may also have been impressed by the fact of a personal contact with the great man. It was on the occasion of Washington's residence in the city as President that the boy's nurse followed the popular hero into a shop one day, and presented his little namesake; and that Washington laid his hand in blessing on the head of his future biographer.

The lad was in no sense a prodigy; he was simply an affectionate, merry, frolicsome, handsome boy, with a spice of mischief, whose pranks gave his tender but admiring mother some uneasiness; she would exclaim,

"Oh, Washington! if you were only good!" He was not studious, but he was fond of reading, and early developed the "scribbling" propensity in the composition of verses and plays; at school he used to write compositions for boys who would do his sums in arithmetic. His education was conducted under several indifferent teachers, and was without thoroughness. From his last master he got a little Latin, and about the same time he took some lessons in music, and, unknown to his father, in the pernicious art of dancing. He had read, of such books as fell in his way, those that fed his imagination, Pilgrim's Progress, the story of Sinbad, a translation of Orlando Furioso, and voyages and travels. We gather from his memoir that he was a lovely, idle, active-minded, sensitive boy, without application, longing to go somewhere on a pilgrimage, a dreamer of dreams. His schooling ended when he was sixteen; it is evident that he did not follow his brothers in Columbia College because he had no sort of tendency toward discipline and application. Because he must have some career, and he developed neither inclination for college nor for business, he was put into a law office. But law he never seriously studied. The career of ambition at that time was politics, and that was best entered through the law. Irving was not robust; there was in the family circumstances no pressing need of his earning a living, and he was left to drift along in vague expectation of what might turn up.

What happened was that the boy dipped into litera-

ture in a hap-hazard manner while seated amid the law books, assimilating no doubt eagerly what suited his purpose, and cultivated his equally strong taste for society. He had a great love of music, and he early acquired a taste for the theatre. His first indulgence in this prohibited amusement was in company with a boy somewhat his senior, named James K. Paulding, whose sister was the wife of Washington's brother William. When once the delight was tasted, the boy repeated it as often as possible, and as the theatre was near his home, he learned how to sandwich the nine o'clock family prayers between the chief play and the after-piece; that is, he stole home from the theatre in time for the devotion, then pretended to go to bed, but escaped out of his bedroom window down the roof, and was soon again in his seat, an excited spectator of the mimic world. New York had enjoyed a regular theatre since 1750, but its quality we can infer from Irving's no doubt very good description of it in the "Jonathan Oldstyle" letters, and from his recommendation: "To the actors—less etiquette, less fustian, less buckram. To the orchestra—new music, and more of it. To the pit—patience, clean benches, and umbrellas. To the boxes—less affectation, less noise, less coxcombs. To the gallery—less grog, and better constables; and, To the whole house, inside and outa total reformation."

The lad's delicate health would partly account for his disinclination to any routine pursuit or severe study.

Before he was seventeen symptoms of pulmonary disease developed, and travel and sojourn in the country were tried. We find him hunting in the Sleepy Hollow region, and making journeys up the Hudson, and to the Mohawk, where he had a married sister residing. There was at that time delightful society in Albany and Schenectady, which was attractive to the young man, and made as decided an impression on him as the scenery of the Hudson, which he was the first to celebrate. The charms of natural scenery seldom get any popular recognition except through a literary culture.

In 1802 Irving became a clerk in the law office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman, and formed the family intimacy which had such an influence upon his career. The office, however, did not confine him; he renewed his travels, and with Mr. Hoffman made the then difficult woods journey to Ogdensburg, and as far as Montreal, enduring some of the pleasures of roughing it, and making acquaintance with the Red Man, who was not attractive to him, but whose unjust treatment by our government aroused his indignation not many years after. It was while he was a law clerk, and when he was nineteen years old, that he wrote for the Chronide, a newspaper established by his brother Peter, a series of articles on the theatres and the manners of the town, signed "Jonathan Oldstyle." These attracted a great deal of local attention, and procured for Irving the acquaintance of Charles Brockden Brown, and an offer from him of employment on a literary periodical. That these juvenile imitations of English essays were copied and quoted and applauded shows the extreme literary dearth of the time, and the eagerness to get out of the conventional style of newspaper writing. The papers were saucy and readable, and not without wit, and they contain a passage or two of manly sensibility, notably one in which the boy exhibits his chivalry towards women by making an indignant protest against the heartless way in which maiden ladies are commonly spoken of. Slight as these papers were, and worthless as they are now, except as a landmark of the author's development, we have to note of them that they were popular, that they had a certain personal flavor that attracted attention and gave pleasure, and that this must be said of nearly every thing that Irving wrote thereafter. Whatever critics may say of his writings, they had from the first this quality that gained them instant recognition and made them enjoyed.

We see now that the boy had the artistic temperament; his love of the picturesque and the adventurous in books, his fondness for music and the theatre, and his idle, dreaming way, which begat little hope of him in his father's eyes, declare this. When he went to Europe and came in contact with an old civilization, with a society ordered by etiquette and refinement and luxury, he was not a stranger to it, and he entered into all the amenities of life, into the enjoyment of art and music and historical associations, like one native and born thereto.



All this has a close connection with the tone of his literature and with its quality. Considering his surroundings in a commercial and not artistic and not very intellectual city, in a land staring new and fighting for its position, which got its literature, and to some extent its manners, second-hand from England, this absence of what it is now fashionable to call "provincialism" in young Irving is very remarkable. And when I couple with this the fact that he was always, boy and man, an ardent patriot, an ingrained American, and never in art an affected cognoscente, nor in manner the least bit the "snob," I see why he was able to contribute to the elevation of the taste of his countrymen and to their culture in what is best in the old civilizations, and at the same time to retain their affection. But it must be said that up to the time Irving went abroad the second time, his chief ambition seemed to be to shine as a man of society, and he had the appearance of valuing his achievements with the pen only as a means to social distinction.

That Irving had an inborn bent to literature, and that he was in fact good for nothing else, we can see now, but his circumstances offered no inducement for the career he finally adopted. So far as we know, there was but one man in America who had adopted literature as a profession—Charles Brockden Brown, whose strange romances had little popular recognition. American literature did not exist. The autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, which deserves a very high place in it, was not published

—thanks to his degenerate son—till 1817. The best writing of the past two centuries—a period fertile in political essays—on the science of government had been done in America, and of controversial theology and polemical verse there was no lack; but Irving was the first to enter the field of literature, the first to awaken his countrymen to a consciousness of their capacities in this direction, and to announce to the world that America proposed to take a hand in it. That his first effort (the "Salmagundi") was an imitation is not surprising, and that he did not absolutely break with the old is no doubt one reason why he obtained so quick foreign recognition.

This country at first would seem to be quite barren of food for the imagination of such a writer as Irving, who was always a backward-looking man, whose mind dwelt more willingly in traditions than in the present. is the only nation that has no folk-lore—no misty past; the sun shines plainly on our first beginnings. morally sublime, they are visibly prosaic. Our best efforts to put the Red Man, our only prehistoric possession, in a romantic light are sad failures in the main. Irving (in the Knickerbocker and the Hudson River legends) remedied for the region in which he lived something of this defect in romance and tradition, and his achievement is unique in modern times; it amounted to a creation, and it is performed with a simplicity that makes the result all the more surprising. And it is also to be noted that although permanent, and almost as well based in the popular mind as veritable history, the elements of it are humorous, and have little of the common seriousness of the myth.

In 1804, when Irving came of age, he was in such danger of a speedy departure from this world by the door of consumption, that his brothers determined to try the effect of a sea voyage, and sent him to Europe. He was abroad almost two years, and the journey restored his health. It was not fruitful in a literary way. He wrote many charming letters, however, in which we discover his perfect accommodation to the society, art, and luxury he enjoyed. His journey lay through France, and by way of Genoa to Sicily, and thence to Rome. It was a time of disturbance and insecurity of travel; Napoleon's spies followed and detained him in France; the vessel in which he went to Sicily was overhauled by pirates; he had to dodge the cruisers in a fruit boat to get across to Naples. In Rome he was so seduced by the climate, the congenial antiquity, the art, and the charm of the company of Washington Allston, with whom he there contracted a life-long friendship, that he was upon the point of embracing the profession of a painter. He had a good eye for color, and in Allston's stimulating society the art no doubt seemed easy, but he reflected that inclination is not genius, and went on his idle way. He passed several months in Paris, which was more to his taste than any other foreign city, studying French and diligently frequenting the theatres and the opera, and made a short

sojourn in London. This was not an energetic pilgrimage, and he disappointed his brothers in not travelling more, and taking more advantage of his opportunities. But he was not to be forced out of his humor. His letters of the period abound in faithful and vivid descriptions of what interested him in scenery and historical remains; but what interested him especially was society, and he had the entry and was a favorite in the best whenever he chose to seek it. Society, indeed, was his natural element; he began in it early, and perhaps no other author of his repute was more immersed in it than he was, as he somewhere remarks, for the better part of half a century. And yet he was formed for intimate friendships, and better than society he liked the quiet intercourse of the domestic circle. Had his longing for happiness in that been gratified by marriage, we can only speculate upon the effect on his literary career. His literature might have lacked a certain element of sentiment and longing which contributed greatly to its popularity.

Upon his return, without any settled plans, and certainly with no expectation of a literary life, he pulled together enough legal information to pass a lenient examination, and was admitted to the bar. Having accomplished this, he gave himself up to such pleasures as the town afforded. He was "champion of the tea-parties," a gallant in any city he visited, and had a large social acquaintance in New York, Albany, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. He was one of a set of young fellows in New

York who united some literary taste with convivial habits, and posed for "sad dogs." They made much of cheap feasts at city porter-houses, and something mysterious of revelries at Cockloft Hall, an old mansion on the Passaic, described in "Salmagundi." There wasn't much harm done in the end, for all these terrible roysterers had shelters in sweet homes, and the constant company of pure and lovely women who united discretion with wit and engaging manners. The habit of the day was free and unconventional we infer, and prudery was probably not a necessary sign or protection of innocence in either sex; the conversation even of gentlemen was garnished with strange oaths; at the suppers there was hard, conscientious drinking and much bacchanalian singing, and it was considered better for a man to go under the table from the effects of the compulsory bumper than to decline it.

Irving tried a little local politics at this time as a stepping-stone to an appointment; but his experience in the Sixth Ward disgusted him, and his feeble solicitation at Albany got him no office; indeed he couldn't run with the hungry pack of office-seekers, and he speedily gave up the idea of saving his country on a government salary.

Irving's private letters of this period show a little affectation of knowing the world, a callowness, in short, which is absent from his European correspondence, and shows, may be, that he had fallen back into the so-called

"provincial" conditions. But among them are some to a belle of the time, Miss Mary Farlie, "the fascinating Farlie," the "Sophia Sparke" of the "Salmagundi," which reveal the man, as he then was, his devotion to the calls of fashion and the rounds of tea-party life in whatever city he chanced to be, his pleasure in the little flutter of coquetry with which the serious enjoyments of life are prefaced, but also his fine, pure nature and his chivalrous admiration of woman. I cannot quote at length, but there is a passage in a letter to Miss Farlie from Richmond, where he was attending the trial of Aaron Burr, in which he defends the sex from unworthy motives in its sympathy for the fallen man, and declares that it results from the merciful and heaven-born disposition implanted in the female bosom, which ever inclines in favor of the accused and the unfortunate, and he adds, "I love your sex ten times better than ever." If he idealized the sex, it must be said that his conduct towards women always conformed to his romantic ideal.

Irving was now twenty-four years old. He had adopted no business, for his dallying with the law cannot be seriously considered. He was not a student, and his outfit for life, such as it was, had been gained from contact with society and not from books. His first literary venture was about to be tried, and perhaps the sort of education he had gained contributed not a little to the freshness and vigor of this first effort, and made him apprehend the channel by which the popular ear could

be reached. In January, 1807, Washington, his brother William, and James K. Paulding issued the first number of the "Salmagundi." Never did a modest little duodecimo sheet of a few pages make more stir in a community. Its declared purpose was "simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." It had in it an air of society condescending to literature. In manner it was an imitation of the "Spectator" and the "Citizen of the World;" but it showed so much original humor, was so buoyantly written, so audacious, affected such an indifference to praise or profit, was so complacently superior, and so knowing concerning the "whim-whams" of the town, that it was a great success from the start. It seemed, notwithstanding its imitation, the most original and lively of all native productions, and as such was copied and imitated in other cities. After the lapse of seventy-five years, a good deal of the humor seems overdone and antiquated, a good deal of it is puerile and dreary fun; but I find it on the whole amusing reading, and worth while as a study of manners at the beginning of this century. After running for twenty numbers it suddenly stopped, in the full career of success, with the whimsical indifference to the public its writers had always pretended. The authors made little out of it except reputation, and quit it on a disagreement with the publisher, just when Irving was kindling up to the work. He himself in later years did not value his share in it; but the critics have discovered in these free and irresponsible essays, the germs and suggestions of nearly everything he did afterwards, and some critics think portions of this juvenile performance equal to anything he produced later in life; his judgment is, however, right about it, its chief value lies in the "everything he did afterwards."

By this clever experiment Irving discovered and tried his powers, and his career was determined by it, although he was himself unconscious that his calling was fixed. He was still the inmate of a law office, and a young man about town, and the applause of the widening social circle in which he moved was probably the result of "Salmagundi," which he most prized. He had already extended his acquaintance to Washington and Richmond, and found more or less attractions in every city where beauty and wit had leisure for that sort of social skirmishing in which he delighted. Knee-breeches had not yet gone out of vogue, and fashionable life still retained those ornaments who had a more than local reputation as "beaux" and "belles." In Irving's devotion to the opposite sex there was a touch of the old-time gallantry. Personally he must have awakened a reciprocal admiration. His biographer, with a characteristic family reticence of personal details, has given no personal description of our author. But a drawing by Vanderlyn in Paris in 1805, and a portrait by Jarvis in 1809, present him to us in the fresh bloom of manly beauty. The face has an air of distinction and gentle breeding; the refined lines, the

poetic chin, the sensitive mouth, the shapely nose, the large dreamy eyes, the intellectual forehead, and the clustering brown locks are our ideal of the writer of the "Sketch-Book" and the "Pilgrim in Spain." A relation, who saw much of our author in his latter years, writes me: "He had dark gray eyes, a handsome straight nose, which might perhaps be called large; a broad, high, full forehead, and a small mouth. I should call him of medium height, about five feet eight and one half to nine inches, and inclined to be a trifle stout. There was no peculiarity about his voice; but it was pleasant, and had a good intonation. His smile was exceedingly genial, lightening up his whole face, and rendering it very attractive; while if he were about to say anything humorous, it would beam forth from his eyes even before the words were spoken. As a young man, his face was exceedingly handsome, and his head was well covered with dark hair; but from my earliest recollections of him, he wore neither whiskers nor moustache, but a dark brown wig, which, although it made him look younger, concealed a beautifully shaped head."

It was some months after the discontinuance of "Salmagundi" that the work was projected which was to give our author fame. It grew out of a literary freak. In connection with his brother Peter, who had considerable literary talent and a severer taste than Washington at the time, he began a mock history, in burlesque of "A Picture of New York," by Dr. Samuel Mitchell, just pub-

lished, and intended as a travesty on that and other contemporary pedantic lore. This joint composition accounts for the chief fault of the Knickerbocker; the book was well advanced and consisted of a mass of erudite and rather juvenile nonsense, when Peter was called by his business to Europe, and Irving was left to finish the work. In his hands the conception changed; he limited the scope of the history to the period of the Dutch governors, for the sake of epic unity, and compressed the mass of affected learning into five introductory chapters. He subsequently wished that he had reduced it to one chapter; a further improvement would have been to throw away that one. In his humorous fancy the time of the Dutch rule became the poetic age of the city; this conception expanded into a unique portraiture of race and character, and "The History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker," was finished substantially as we have it now. This was in 1809, when Irving was twenty-six years old.

But before this humorous creation was completed, the author endured the terrible bereavement which was to color his whole life. He had formed a deep and tender passion for Matilda Hoffman, the second daughter of Josiah Ogden Hoffman, in whose family he had long been on a footing of the most perfect intimacy; and his ardent love was fully reciprocated. Irving was restlessly casting about for some assured means of livelihood, which would enable him to marry,—perhaps his distrust of a literary career was connected with this desire,—when,

almost without warning, Miss Hoffman died, in the eighteenth year of her age. Without being a dazzling beauty, she was lovely in person and mind, with most engaging manners, a refined sensibility, and a delicate and playful humor. The loss was a crushing blow to Irving, from the effects of which he never recovered, although time softened the bitterness of his grief into a tender and sacred memory. He could never bear any allusion to her, even from his most intimate friends. death, in a private repository, of which he always kept the key, was found a lovely miniature, a braid of fair hair, and a strip of paper on which was written, in his own hand, "Matilda Hoffman;" and with these treasures were several pages of a memorandum, in ink long since faded. He kept through life her Bible and her Prayer Book; they were placed nightly under his pillow in the first days of anguish that followed her loss, and ever after they were the inseparable companions of all his This memorandum, it subsequently appeared, was a copy of a letter addressed to Mrs. Foster, a married lady, in which the story of his early love was related as a reason why he had never married. It was in 1823, while he sojourned in Dresden, that he became intimate with an English family residing there, named Foster, and conceived for the daughter, Miss Emily Foster, a deep attachment. The Fosters believed that this would have resulted in marriage if the lady's affections had not been preoccupied. Irving's biographer thinks otherwise,

and gives reasons for believing that he could not at that time have entertained a project of matrimony. It is not for us to question his judgment, with his full knowledge of the circumstances; yet it is evident that Irving was very seriously impressed and very much unsettled until he drove away the impression by hard work with his pen; and it would be nothing new in human nature and experience if he had, for the time, yielded to the attractions of loveliness and a most congenial companionship, and had returned again to an exclusive devotion to the image of the early loved and lost. That bereavement cast a cloud over his otherwise gay disposition which was never altogether dissipated, and gave an abiding tinge of melancholy to his life. Its effect upon his literature is not less discernible; it appears here and there in certain half-tones of tenderness. I think its sentiment pervades the "Sketch-Book;" a touching passage in Rural Funerals is colored by this memory; and we recognize the note in a passage in St. Mark's Eve in "Bracebridge Hall," beginning, "I have loved as I never again shall love in this world-I have been loved as I never again shall be loved." The two months after this event Irving spent in retirement; but solitude was as insupportable as society, and the author, who never for long nursed a grief in idle repining, sought relief in the completion of his book. He felt himself that the spirit was taken out of it, and never looked back to its composition with pleasure. The loving eyes that he expected to see

dance with sympathetic merriment in its perusal would never see its pages.

The History, which was first printed in Philadelphia, to avoid a premature disclosure of its character, was heralded by a series of preparatory advertisements, intended to awaken interest in a genuine historical work. Information was desired of a small, elderly gentleman, dressed in an old black coat and cocked hat, who had disappeared from his lodgings in the city. After a few days it was announced that this person had left behind a curious manuscript, which his landlord would be obliged to sell if the old gentleman did not return and settle for his board and lodging. This advertising device was so successful that one of the city authorities came to consult Irving's brother on the propriety of offering a reward for the missing Diedrich. The announcement of the book was that of a grave history of the colony and city under the Dutch government, and the author carried his whim so far as to dedicate it to the New York Historical Society, a liberty which a little nettled the grave antiquarians of that body. Great was the astonishment of those who sat down to a perusal of it as a veritable history to find, instead, a whimsical and lightly satirical portrait of their ancestors. Such a piece of irreverence shocked and confounded them. His friend Mrs. Hoffman wrote him at Philadelphia, on its first appearance: "Your good friend the old lady [the mother of Josiah Ogden Hoffman] came home in a great stew this evening. Such a scandalous

story had got about town a book had come out, called a History of New York; nothing but a satire and ridicule of the old Dutch people and they said you was the auther; but from this foul slander, I'll venture to say, she has defended you. She was quite in a heat about it." No were others. Some of Irving's best friends, old ladies of Albany and Scheneetady, were deeply offended, and round the author should never be received again in society; so deep and lasting was the irritation that Mr. Gulian C. Verplanck, Irving's friend, in an address before the Historical Society as late as 1818, while complimenting the author, criticised the beek as a "coarse caricontinued of the later of the second second dissipated most of the social clouds and even the Dutch critics. -ilamen lina geilmurda oda lohmodovimuro had roda nodu that think off oregon william found the right and enjourned is with the reas of the world. They did not then tion the social make it gained and gainst each would endered of mobile that had been given in this community. the folial saw record wit believed bands of the stands estions langualina prio rear els es religiós lementar rous neus eur Lussiner von . Die dies diesert rechte di merkania in incresse meni am Menis gent and in incre the time that after the lines at the final of Hiere or their plant and indications it reasons were made minier Lin is Serve.

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forerunner in English literature. In spontaneity and joyous vigor it must be assigned a place among the productions of the springtime of national literatures. Of its humor one is tempted to use the words grotesque and gigantic, but we must add youthful. It is a masterpiece, and I think Irving's masterpiece, though not in style; a very little of the mock-heroic usually wearies, and nothing but genius of the first order in humor could carry off a volume of it. The creation may be described as an event rather than a book. No other American conception has so entered into the popular mind. The whimsicality has a certain historical solidity. The Knickerbocker legend is something more than a legend, something more than a tradition, it is the creation of a caste, a society, it fixed upon the metropolis of the New World an ineffaceable character, a sort of romantic illusion. No other author of modern times has performed any such feat as this. has assumed such proportions and importance, that it almost passes beyond the bounds of a literary creation. Millions of people who accept the Knickerbocker assumption as a verity, and use the name for a thousand purposes, never read the History; just as millions of people are on familiar terms with Gulliver who never read a line of Swift, and count Don Quixote a part of their mental furniture without knowing the name of Cervantes. This popular diffusion stamps the work as one of the few masterpieces of humor, and makes almost impertinent a literary criticism of the book. It may be

said, however, that its effect upon the modern reader is marred by the surplusage of the introductory matter, the elephantine fun of which is no longer funny, and that in places the breadth of the humor was better suited to a former age than it is to this. But whatever may be said of the juvenile expansion of its style, I take it that no one would care to undertake to mend it, or to disturb in any way the richest piece of native humor that the country has produced.

In Irving's preface to the revised edition of the History published in 1848, he speaks of its aim: "It was to embody the conditions of our city in an amusing form; to illustrate its local humors, customs, and peculiarities; to clothe home scenes and places and familiar names with those imaginative and whimsical associations so seldom met with in our country, but which live like charms and spells about the cities of the old world, binding the heart of the native inhabitant to his home." The effect, however, was far beyond this, and the work made itself felt for a long time in the literary production of the city. There grew up in time, with the addition of other influences, what was known as the "Knickerbocker School," which had its type in the Knickerbocker Maga-These other influences were not altogether local. zine. There broke out some time before the century was half completed a sentimental development, a sort of literary measles, which pervaded all the light literature, and even the newspapers. Amidst some genuine pathos and fine

writing, there prevailed this rash of sentimentality, a mawkish and lachrymose tone in verse and prose-lines to dead babies, mewlings over old letters and blighted hopes, the dead, dead past, and the like—which continued more or less woe among us till the modern "humorist" scoffed it out of existence. This sentimental outbreak was intimately connected with the great moral and reform agitations of the time, by some sort of affinity that it would be interesting to trace. Another element came in to make the Knickerbocker School; it was a light thing, and I do not like to insist too much on it; it may be described as "society" literature, and Mr. N. P. Willis was its hierophant. This very clever man, who was the most dexterous phrase-maker of his day, and had a certain grace in his verbal touch—it had in it the art of tying a cravat with careless and killing ease—imparted to the sweetest sentiment an air of persiflage, and whipped up emotions into an agreeable syllabub, which had the flavor and permanence of an ice confection taken between dances at a ball. Irving, as we have seen, was a man of society, and he was able to make even society accept his literature, but it was by no such process as this. The Knickerbocker School was affected in its wit and vivacity as it was in its sentiment; it was unfruitful, and insincere, if that is not too severe a word to use towards a coterie whose chief sin was mutual admiration of mediocrity. I mention it here in connection with Irving, because the whole thing has been more or less directly laid to his

charge. A cynical sort of criticism, which swings a shillalah with a hilarious pleasure, merely for delight in smashing, and finds nothing in life really amusing except "earnestness," has included Irving in its otherwise not too-sweeping estimate of this "School." But I can find no warrant for the sentimental gush of his followers in his manly sentiment; they had neither his simple, wholesome humor, nor his transparent style, nor his high purpose as an artist. Irving abounded in sentiment, but his artistic sense of "good form"—to borrow a modern phrase—kept him on the safe side almost always in its expression. Besides, I am disposed to stick for the value to the world of sentiment in literature—such sentiment as Irving's—and to doubt whether we have gained anything by becoming ashamed of our emotions.

The favorable reception of the History far exceeded Irving's expectations. He found himself at once famous. Wherever he went he was the centre of attraction. For a time this distinction gratified and amused him, but the moment the excitement was over he fell into a despondency, and tried in vain to keep up his spirits. He is very frank about his feelings at this time; he admits that he made an effort to form other attachments, but, he says, "my heart would not hold on, it would continually recur to what it had lost." But for this dejection it would be strange, after his extraordinary success, that he should still have hesitated to adopt literature as his profession. But for two years, and with leisure, he did

nothing. He had even hope of political preferment in a small way; and he entered into a mercantile partnership with his brothers, which was to involve little work for him, and such share of the profits as should assure him support and leave him free to follow his literary bent. Yet he seems to have been mainly intent upon society and the amusement of the passing hour, and, without the spur of necessity to his literary capacity, he yielded to the temptations of indolence, and settled into the unpromising position of a gentleman of leisure.

The peril to trade involved in the war of 1812 gave him forebodings, and aroused him to some effort. accepted the editorship of a periodical called Select Reviews, afterwards changed to the Analectic Magazine, for which he wrote several sketches, some of which were introduced into the "Sketch-Book," and several reviews and naval biographies. But the slight editorial care required was irksome to a man who had an unconquerable repugnance to all periodical labor. The business of his firm, and of other New York importing merchants, sent him often to Washington to look after their interests. visits greatly extended his acquaintance with the leading men of the country, and, as usual, brought him into the thick of gayety and fashion. His political leanings did not prevent an intimacy with the President's family, and Mrs. Madison and he were sworn friends.

Although a Federalist and an admirer of England, his sympathies were all with his country in the war of 1812,

and he took active service on the military staff of Governor Tompkins. The sudden ending of the war defeated his intention of entering the regular army; and in 1815 he made a visit to his brother Peter, his business partner, in England, intending only a brief sojourn. He remained abroad seventeen years.

The first part of Irving's five years' residence in England was spent in the harassments of business, in a vain effort to extricate the affairs of his firm from the difficulties into which the fluctuations of trade had cast it. brother Peter was an invalid, and Irving set himself to learn the mysteries of bookkeeping, and undertook all the uncongenial drudgery of the Liverpool counting-The struggle was prolonged through two years, when the brothers were compelled to seek relief in bankruptcy. This was a sore trial, and he felt the humiliation of it more on others' account than his own; the ruin of such a family connection in business, and of so many honorable hopes, stung him chiefly on Peter's account; to him escape from uncongenial employment was a great relief, and he was quite willing, even eager, to assume the responsibilities it involved. These responsibilities, I may say in a word, were practically the support of several of his relations by his pen. Up to this time he had figured as the ornamental genius of the family, and he had accepted the aid his brothers lovingly extended to him in full brotherly confidence. There was a delightful absence of any feeling of obligation or dependence on either

side. Now the relations were changed, but there was no change of feeling. A common purse was not a fiction in this case, and there is nothing more admirable than the care Irving took, when he began to earn money with his pen, that his brother Peter should feel that somehow he conferred a favor by sharing it. During the temporary periods of Peter's returning health, various futile business projects were set on foot for which Washington furnished the capital, and which had at least the effect of amusing his brother. I may say here that this loving duty, which Irving undertook with regard to his relations, formed a great part of the pleasure of his life; Peter was supported in comfort wherever he chose to reside, and on Irving's return to America, Sunnyside became in effect the home of the whole "clan." It was a family of marked gifts and capacities, the brothers all had enviable literary talent, and the sisters were women of culture, solid character, and many graces; but perhaps the greatest gift of all was that of affection and unselfish nobility of spirit.

Irving's sister Sarah (Mrs. Van Wart) was living with her husband and family in Birmingham, and he there found a home and refuge in the midst of his cares. He was far from robust, and was at times incapacitated for any sort of work. A tormenting cutaneous malady, which showed itself in his ankles, made walking impossible, and irritated him out of the mood of composition. All his life afterwards he was assailed by this, laid up for months

at times, driven to easy travel for distraction, and sent in search of the healing of medical springs. This malady was cheerfully and heroically borne, but it accounts for much of Irving's occasional depression, and to some extent for his long fits of literary inactivity. I have no doubt that a physician would attribute much of the loitering and wavering in his pursuits to his early ill health and this later malady.

During the time of his business perplexities Irving had made several excursions in England, Wales, and Scotland, the fruits of which were to appear afterwards, and he had obtained that knowledge of the English people, and sympathy with what was admirable in English life, which made acceptable to them what he wrote, even when he criticised. He also had formed acquaintance and friendship with many of the prominent English authors of the day, and was insured a certain amount of literary encouragement.

In August, 1818, Irving went up to London and cast himself upon the fortune of his pen. It was a bold step; it exhibits a modest confidence in his own abilities, and in connection with his family responsibilities the good fibre of the man. Thereafter he was not to be turned from his career. He discountenanced efforts at home to obtain for him a diplomatic appointment, and to the chagrin and mortification of his brothers, who evidently had no confidence in literature as a profession, he declined an offered situation in the Navy Department at

Washington. The spirit in which he set about his work was that expressed in a letter to his brother William in 1811: "Whatever I may write in future, I am determined upon one thing—to dismiss from my mind all party prejudice and feeling as much as possible, and to endeavor to contemplate every subject with a candid and good-natured eye."

This was the time of the "Sketch-Book." The story of its brilliant success has been often told. It was an international event, and we cannot now do justice to the book without recalling the circumstances in which it appeared and the motive that dictated it. The first number was published in America, in May, 1819, when the author was thirty-six years old. It contained only The Voyage, Roscoe, The Wife, and Rip Van Winkle. The second instalment contained Rural Life in England, The Broken Heart, English Writers on America, and The Art of Bookmaking. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow did not appear till the sixth instalment, and the whole was completed in America in September, 1820. It had not been originally the author's intention to publish it in England; but the news of its success in America came over, the numbers began to be reprinted without authority, and Irving was obliged to protect himself. He took the material to Mr. John Murray, whose liberality with authors was pro-. verbial; but Murray civilly declined it, and Irving undertook the publication at his own risk. To this he was encouraged by Scott, who predicted his success.

book sold in England as it sold in America. It is an old story, and it used to be told with national pride, how Mr. Murray was very speedily glad to have the honor and profit of publishing the books of the American author, and perhaps no publisher's note of declination was ever read with more pleasure than Murray's after his change of attitude.

Of course Mr. Murray made a mistake; he did not correctly foresee what the public would like and buy. But looking at the material offered him from the publisher's point of view, and remembering that the book least likely to sell is a series of sketches by an author of no established reputation in the community where it is offered, his rejection does not seem strange. Nay, looking at the book now, when circumstances have altered, I am not sure but a publisher would come to the same conclusion.

Irving wrote the book with a distinct object. The two countries had not recovered from the irritation of the late war. The comments of English travellers and newspapers had contributed to keep alive and deepen the alienation. In fact the Americans had been so estranged from England since the rupture of the colonial period, that they were ignorant of the country, and its traditions had lost their hold on them. The spirit in which Americans regarded England was misrepresented and misunderstood, and there was a good deal of bad blood that was the result only of ignorance and prejudice. Irving set

himself to remove this, so far as his own countrymen were concerned, by a sympathetic description of what was attractive in Englishmen, their country, ways, and customs; and perhaps no book ever so revived a faded and romantic interest in an old home as did the "Sketch-Book." It was one of the great mollifying and civilizing influences of the age, so far as the two kindred peoples were concerned. It created an affectionate interest in England, even in the breasts of those who still disliked the mingled hauteur and condescension of the Islanders. Naturally its effect was not so marked in England, but it was accepted as a graceful overture of friendship, and the author himself was taken to the English heart. His plea for good neighborship was not misunderstood either as any concession of American independence or any currying of favor. One of the earliest papers, that On English Writers on America, is a plain telling of disagreeable truths, without apology; but I do not read that it caused any irritation. The sympathetic spirit seen in the author enabled John Bull to accept fair criticism without offence.

One cannot speak too warmly of the charming spirit of this book, nor of its delightful style; the loveliness of the country, the venerable places of pilgrimage, the traditions, were so described that even to-day the sentimental pilgrim can find no better expression of his feeling than in these descriptions; and yet the book, having accomplished its mission in its generation, is nearly a book of the past, and as we turn its pleasant pages we

er a little at the sensation they once made in all the English reading world. The book opened to the author all doors of literature and fashion in the kingdom, it won him the friendship of the men and women most conspicuous in letters and politics and society. When, shortly after it was published, he ran over to Paris, where his reputation preceded him, word came that the "Sketch-Book" was making a great fame for him in England. in the Edinburgh Review, paid it a most flattering tribute, and even the savage Quarterly, which had a character to sustain for railing at every thing, praised it. A rumor attributed it to Scott; at least, it was said, he must have revised it and given to it its exquisite style. Crayon is the most fashionable fellow of the day," wrote the painter Leslie. Lord Byron, in a letter to Murray, underscored his admiration of the author; and subsequently said to an American, "His Crayon-I know it by heart, at least there is not a passage that I cannot refer to immediately;" and afterwards he wrote to Moore, his "writings are my delight." There seemed to be, as one wrote, "a kind of conspiracy to hoist him over the heads of his contemporaries." Perhaps the best barometer of his popularity was the mounting enthusiasm of his publisher, which was solidly expressed. And this capture of the English reading world was made at the moment when Scott and Byron were its idols.

Yet I am not quite sure but we would look upon the "Sketch-Book" as a tradition, full of a certain tender inter-

est yet, and not quite consigned to the company of those "Annuals" and "Keepsakes" of the period, which preserve to us in their binding of watered silk a sweet aroma of good society and literary self-conscious sentiment, but for two papers, the Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. We turn the leaves of the other essays uncertain whether the slight pleasure we experience is not a recollection of a pleasure we once had in them; but with these two it is quite otherwise. We know them by heart, but they have the charm for us that a fairy tale has for a child the hundredth time it is told. indefinable charm of the genuine folk-lore. simple Rip Van Winkle is. A less artist would have dressed it up and overloaded it with a thousand fanciful elaborations, such as the imagination of each of us likes to supply. How true it seems, and how old. In fact it is old. And yet the original setting, the exquisite adaptation of the legend to its locality make it a new creation. It has the same dignity of antiquity as the Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, or of the Moslem youths, attended by the wise dog Ketmehr, who went to sleep in the cave above Damascus. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow has hardly the same quality, but it is nearly as sure of immortality. It is, like the other, a permanent invention and the property of mankind, and, like the loom of Penelope, has passed beyond the perils of a literary tenure. It is a slightly hard and cruel story—it is almost the only instance in a story where Irving is remorseless towards a character; and I cannot but think that it would be vastly better if the author had displayed a little touch of pity for Ichabod Crane, had endowed him with some little shade of pathos. The figure, unfortunately, must stand as it is cut out, in all its angular unloveliness, without relief, a simple compound of ugliness and greed, and so remorselessly dealt with that the reader almost instinctively supplies for him that pity which the author denied. His very ungainliness pleads for him at last, and we believe that even a Connecticut schoolmaster must have had some of the feelings of a man. He is very real, as real as Don Quixote; and what a contrast! the more ridiculous the Knight of La Mancha is, the more we love him.

These two short tales, inventions, fancies—how slight they are! not perhaps worth the serious attention of the ponderous critic, who makes a reputation every day, and every day destroys two, and would make one for himself if he had leisure to spare for such a trifle—these two little airy figments out of the fancy of an idle man, I am inclined to say, have as much power of living on in the popular mind as any thing done, said, or written in this century. And the amazing thing about them is that they are "local," and under a strong suspicion of being "provincial," having sprung out of a virgin soil never sown with tradition nor watered by age and custom.

"Bracebridge Hall" was published in England and America in May, 1822. Before its appearance Irving had been getting the better of his malady, and found himself involved in all the whirl of a London season. The new book gave great satisfaction, and the author was nearly killed with kindness. To say that he was the fashion, is fully to express the demands upon his time and strength. He was sought by everybody. His writings won for him the entry to the highest social circles in the kingdom, where he was welcome as a friend and not as the curiosity of a day, and his footing was equally good with his brethren of the quill. To mention his companions would be to name most of the literary lights of the time, and his relations with many of them were those of the most cordial friendship. "Bracebridge Hall" is not a book to make a man's reputation, but it is one to extend it and increase the liking for him. It avoids some of the weaknesses of the "Sketch-Book," and in it his style attains perhaps the perfection of ease and finish. The slight fiction of the assembly in a great country house of many wedding guests enables the author to depict English character and customs, and to give his readers a number of charming stories. One of these is a characteristic Dutch story of his own country, Dolph Heyliner. the little sketch of the Stout Gentleman, a mere trifle of restrained humor and unsatisfied curiosity, exhibits best the author's art and his dainty grace. And I must not omit mention of the Spectre Ship of the Hudson, in which we have in a few pages one of the most fascinating of all the Knickerbocker legends.

The following year was spent in travel and residence

in Germany, a year made unproductive by the author's illness, and in which occurred the Dresden episode of which I have spoken. In the delightful society of the Saxon capital at that time, and in the antiquated little court of Frederick Augustus and Queen Amalia-good, prim, simple potentates, such as Thackeray liked to create for the entertainment of children-Irving passed a pleasant winter, and if, at the end of it, he tore himself away from the society of the Fosters with a heartache, and went back to Paris with a feeling of being again cast upon the world, he was not long idle. With the Moores and other congenial society to stimulate him, he soon set about another book, and "The Tales of a Traveller" appeared in London in August, 1824. In the opinion of Irving, with which the best critics agreed, Hallam among them, it contained some of his best writing. Its style is criticised as over-refined and labored, and I am conscious now and then of a wish that the melody were broken occasionally by a discord. But it was not a labored composition; it was in fact written rapidly, tossed off page after page in the heat of a composing fury, which surrounded the author with thickly falling manuscript. Up to this time Irving could never harness himself to stated hours of composition, and he often waited months for the literary impulse in a kind of fever of teeming ideas and incapacity of expression. But when he once set to work he wrote with great fluency, and produced in a short time an incredible amount of manuscript.

book has for me a delightful spontaneity, as if the author enjoyed the production of every story. Its variety is surprising: the author is equally at home with the Italian banditti, Captain Kidd, and the poor-devil authors of London. We have Moore's authority for saying that the literary dinner described in the second part has a personal foundation, and he gives the names of the Longmans as the publishers, one of whom was the business partner who let nothing distract him from the carving, while the other was the laughing partner who attended to the jokes. It is a whimsical picture, belonging, rather, if it belongs to any period, to the age of Addison than to that of Scott. In his story of Buckthorne, Irving made his nearest approach to a novel. Whether he could have written a novel of the first class is matter of conjecture, that he could have made an entertaining long story is evident; he had the power of projecting a character, he had the essential charm of narration, and of sprightly dialogue, unfailing delicacy of humor, and the story-teller's art of delay in exciting interest (this appears even in his historical compositions); but whether he had the robust passion needed for a great fiction may be doubted. However this may be, "The Tales of a Traveller" is one of the few thoroughly entertaining collections of short stories in the language, in which the art of turning a good short story is rare. The reader who has leisure may take up this volume sure of enjoyment.

But the volume lacked novelty to the readers of its predecessors, and criticism began to demand a new rôle in the favorite. It was this expressed dissatisfaction that turned Irving's mind to graver themes. He recurred to a previous intention of writing the life of Washington, and he composed a number of semi-political essays, which were never published. At this moment of eagerness to do something, and of doubt, a project was offered which kindled all his imagination. Life of Columbus. Mr. Alexander H. Everett, who was minister to Spain, proposed to him a translation of M. Navarrete's "Voyages of Columbus," which was just appearing, compiled from the diary of Bishop Las Casas, the journals of the great navigator, and other historical documents. Mr. Irving hastened to Madrid in February, He there found that the publication of M. Navarrete was not a history, but rather the materials for one; that the libraries of the capital offered him a mass of unused matter, and he changed his plan and began at once his "History of Columbus." At this he labored with great zeal, and with more continuous industry than he had ever before given to any work. He had come upon a rich mine. His studies constantly opened new themes for his pen, and his fancy kindled with projects that would last him a lifetime. A part of his suite of works illustrating the domination of the Moors in Spain was executed; but the Conquest of Mexico, and the History of the Moors and Montezuma, were destined never to be

written. He was constantly turned aside from the Columbus to compose monographs upon some exciting episode, which he unearthed, and this, with his anxiety to secure historical accuracy, delayed the publication of his greater work till February, 1828. It was shortly followed by the "Companions of Columbus," and later by an abridgment of the Columbus, which he presented to Mr. Murray, his liberal publisher; a gift which was the source of great profit to the latter.

Irving's residence in Spain was prolonged till September, 1829. His life there is a romance in itself. He formed both with the Spaniards and with resident foreigners the most delightful friendships, and he entered into the romance and picturesqueness of land and people with all the zest of an ardent and susceptible nature. Spain has never given her hospitality to an observer in such full sympathy with her past, or one more open to the charms of her present. It needed the sun of Granada, the traditions and customs of a gentle and spirited race lingering in Andalusia, the aroma of the musty chronicles of love and valor in the old libraries, to develop the oriental quality of his imagination.

It was the most fruitful period of his life, and, with the exception of the earliest, of the most consequence to literature. I have not the space here to attempt any analysis of the poetic "Alhambra," or of "The Conquest of Granada" (which in his old age the author thought his best work); nor is it necessary. The Conquest appeared

under the guise of the chronicle of a friar of the period, . and its spirit is that of a contemporary record. It is to a large extent legendary, but authority for all it contains exists in the musty annals of Spain. It is in fact a composition of that border-land between legend and history; in its main facts it rests on the best evidence, its color is true to the floating splendor of an age when drama was acted in reality, and it may be taken as a sufficiently true history of a romantic period. Mr. Prescott says of it, in the introduction to his "Ferdinand and Isabella:" "The reader who will take the trouble to compare his chronicle with the present more prosaic and literal narration, will see how little he has been seduced from historic accuracy by the poetical aspect of his subject." The "Alhambra" is a prose-poem, to which the world is indebted for a great part of its interest in the most luxurious of all the palaces of the Moorish kings. With the splendor and grace of the Saracenic domination Irving was thoroughly fascinated, and we owe to him the opening of one of the most charming realms of which our imagination is free. haps the value of such a realm to American readers, engrossed for the most part in disenchanting material struggles, is not taken sufficient account of.

Irving had doubted the reception of his first grave attempt; but the Columbus had an immediate and continued success. It procured for the author a different, if not higher, recognition than he had yet received—the highest degree from the University of Oxford, and the

royal gold medal from the Society of Literature. has vindicated the substantial accuracy of the history. It was contrasted at the time with Robertson's more literal account of Columbus, and one wishes that some of its rhetorical expressiveness were chastened, and that it were somewhat condensed, but not at the expense of the glow of enthusiastic appreciation which is proper to the narrative. Irving understood the value, in a history, of vivid individual portraiture, and he was by his sympathy enabled to conceive the character of Columbus in all its grand outlines. He presents it in a masterly manner, not anywhere in brilliant and glittering "word painting," but as an expanding conception in the story, which at last looms up in the mind of the reader in gigantic proportions. A simple hero, a magnificent dreamer, a consecrated life ending in the tragedy which is inexorably appointed to every son of man who is to be enshrined in the hearts of mankind.

Towards the close of his residence in Spain the author received the appointment of Secretary of Legation to the American mission in London. He felt a reluctance to undertake the routine of the office, and he had a longing to return home. But when he had been prevailed on to accept it, and was once more launched upon the exciting London society, he found the situation agreeable. During this stay in England he received all the honors that society could give him, he renewed his old friendships, and visited places of note; one of these was Newstead

Abbey, where he was for some time a guest, and to which his pen gave for American readers that romantic interest which almost always attaches to whatever he describes.

His diplomatic position was resigned in September, 1831, but it was not till May, 1832, that the author saw again the land which had been so long pulling at his heart-strings. Mingled with his love of home had grown some doubts of the feelings of his countrymen for him. These were dissipated by the spontaneous outburst of affection that greeted him in America. The whole country was proud of him, and felt how much it had been honored in his person. New York gave him the most brilliant dinner she had ever given; other cities solicited the honor of entertaining him—marks of good-will which the diffidence of the author compelled him to decline. He was entirely wanting in the dinner-table heroism.

Irving was now past middle life, having returned in his fiftieth year, yet neither his long residence abroad, nor his extensive commerce with society, nor his age, made him in the least blasé. On the contrary, his enthusiasm is delightful to see. He marvelled at the progress made in seventeen years, the expansion of the country, the accumulation of wealth, the evidences of refinement, the growth of literature. His pride in what he saw was equal to his curiosity. He at once undertook a comprehensive tour through the South and West, and into the then almost unexplored Southwest, on the Arkansas river. The immediate result of this excursion beyond civilization was

"A Tour on the Prairies," in which he gives a color to a rather prosaic adventure, simply by his charm of narration. It remains to-day as pleasing an account of a Western hunting expedition as we have. What is noteworthy in it, however, is that Irving's mind was able to kindle to this phase of life as readily as to the romance of Spain. Out of this taste of frontier life grew other readable books, "Astoria" and "Captain Bonneville," pieces of book-making, in the first of which he was assisted by his nephew Pierre.

Not only was his enthusiasm fresh, but the flow of literary productiveness was in full tide; if experience had chastened his humor, it had not abated the freedom of his fancy nor chilled his ardor. Some of his best work was yet to be done. Some of his happiest years were before him. He was not only eager to cast in his lot with the vigorous life about him, but he desired a home, a permanent anchorage in his beloved land. The site he fixed upon was on the east bank of the Hudson, near Tarrytown, and within an easy walk of Sleepy Hollow. He purchased a few acres of ground on the bank of the river, having an old Dutch stone cottage, which had belonged to the Van Tassels, which he transformed, without destroying its character, into Sunnyside. The place was small, but it evidently swallowed up a good deal of money. Its situation is lovely. And when the author had added to the house a tower, which in a few years was draped in ivy, the root of which was transplanted

from Melrose Abbey, and upon the top of the tower turned and creaked a venerable Dutch weathercock from Rotterdam; when he had planted trees and shrubs, built conservatories and stables, and laid out secluded walks, he had as pretty a retreat as even his fastidious taste could desire.

But it was not for himself alone that he built and adorned it; nor was it for his own comfort or for the sake of gain that he kept on toiling with his pen. He was able at last to gratify his longing for domestic life, and to offer a home to his surviving brothers and his nieces. His life at Sunnyside, surrounded by his nieces, who were devoted to him, and would have spoiled a more selfish man, is a picture that the mind likes to linger on. is a realization of what one would have wished for a man who had added so much to the enjoyment of his genera-But the limits of this essay do not permit me to dwell upon it, nor in much detail upon his remaining literary achievements. Nor is it necessary to a satisfactory estimate of the man and his works. With the exception of his absence at Madrid as minister, he resided the remainder of his life at Sunnyside, which became a sort of place of pilgrimage for travelling celebrities, young authors, and troops of friends. The consideration in which Irving was held appears by the attitude towards him of the chief authors of his generation, and his sympathy with every rising talent, and his quickness to recognize it, made him beloved by everybody. Never was an author freer from vanity and jealousy.

A considerable portion of the ten years after his return was given to travel and social life, to building, and to putting his savings into productive form (though some of them went into Western speculations that illustrated the facility rather than the security of investments at that period); but he was engaged in a variety of literary projects as well. For a time he undertook regular contributions to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, which was not a lucrative amusement. The books of this period are "A Tour on the Prairies," "Recollections of Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey," "The Legends of the Conquest of Spain," "Astoria," "Captain Bonneville," and a number of graceful papers finally collected under the title of "Wolfert's Roost."

One incident of this period should not be passed in silence: that was the abandonment of his life-long project of writing the History of the Conquest of Mexico to Mr. William H. Prescott. It had been a scheme of his boyhood; he had made collections of materials for it during his first residence in Spain; and he was actually and absorbedly engaged in the composition of the first chapters, when he was sounded by Mr. Cogswell, of the Astor Library, in behalf of Mr. Prescott. Some conversation showed that Mr. Prescott was contemplating the subject upon which Mr. Irving was engaged, and the latter instantly authorized Mr. Cogswell to say that he abandoned it. Although our author was somewhat far advanced, and Mr. Prescott had not yet collected his ma-

terials, Irving renounced the glorious theme in such a manner that Prescott never suspected the pain and loss it cost him, nor the full extent of his own obligation. Some years afterwards Irving wrote to his nephew that in giving it up he in a manner gave up his bread, as he had no other subject to supply its place. "I was," he wrote, "dismounted from my cheval de bataille, and have never been completely mounted since." But he added that he was not sorry for the warm impulse that induced him to abandon the subject, and that Mr. Prescott's treatment of it had justified his opinion of him. Notwithstanding Prescott's very brilliant work, we cannot but feel some regret that Irving did not write a Conquest of Mexico. His method, as he outlined it, would have been the natural one. Instead of partially satisfying the reader's curiosity in a preliminary essay in which the Aztec civilization was exposed, Irving would have begun with the entry of the conquerors, and carried his reader step by step onward, letting him share all the excitement and surprise of discovery which the invaders experienced, and learn of the wonders of the country in the manner most likely to impress both the imagination and the memory; and with his artistic sense of the value of the picturesque he would have brought into strong relief the dramatis personæ of the story.

High as Irving's position was as a man of letters, the consideration in which he was held was much broader than that—it was that of one of the first citizens of the

republic. His friends, readers, and admirers were not merely the literary class, but people of affairs, business, society, and politics, and among these friends were the prominent statesmen of both parties. Almost any career was open to him if he had lent an ear to their solicitations. But political life was not to his taste, and it would have been fatal to his sensitive spirit. It did not require much self-denial, perhaps, to decline the candidacy for mayor of New York, nor the honor of running for Congress; but he put aside also the distinction of a seat in Van Buren's Cabinet as Secretary of the Navy. His acceptance of the mission to Spain, an appointment which plunged him into profound astonishment, was doubtless influenced by the intended honor to his profession, the gratifying manner in which it came to him, his desire to please his friends, and the belief, which was a delusion, that diplomatic life in Madrid would offer no serious interruption to his "Life of Washington," in which he had just become engaged. The nomination—the suggestion of Daniel Webster, Tyler's Secretary of State—was cordially approved by the President and Cabinet, and confirmed almost by acclamation in the Senate. "Ah," said Mr. Clay, who was opposing nearly all the President's appointments, "this is a nomination everybody will concur in!" "If a person of more merit and higher qualification," wrote Mr. Webster in his official notification, "had presented himself, great as is my personal regard for you, I should have yielded it to higher considerations."

other appointment could have been made so complimentary to Spain, and it remains to this day one of the most honorable to his own country.

Irving was in his sixtieth year when he went to Madrid, and he remained away four years. He was not by any means insensible to the honor of the appointment, he thought it rather the crowning honor of his life; but he went with great reluctance, and there seems to have been not a day of his absence that he did not long for Sunny-Nor was he indifferent to the recognition of his fame which met him in Europe; but Sunnyside was every day weighed against the world, and the world kicked the beam. His diplomatic rank gave him access to the courts of England, France, and Spain, where he was received as one well known, with many marks of attention paid to the author rather than the minister. But the shows and spectacles had lost their novelty, the illusions of society were dispelled—he had run the round of it for almost half a century—and he in vain sought to revive the spell that Europe once had for him. He had no more curiosity for great sights or great people, and he escaped when possible from the fine ladies and the attentions of the drawing-rooms. And we, looking through his eyes and his letters of this time, also see Europe faded, and worn, and empty in comparison with that little nest on the Hudson. In all this there was not a shade of cynicism—just a philosophical acceptance of the situation.

In Spain it was impossible but some romantic warmth

should be rekindled, and it is quite easy, as we journey about with him, to renew much of the enthusiasm of other days. Spain was as beautiful to him as ever, and he lost no interest in its people; but there were absences and changes that saddened him, and he found the revival of old associations but a sad pleasure. He could not have come to Spain in a more critical and interesting state of affairs, or one requiring more diplomatic caution and common sense. Isabella II. was queen, but a girl of twelve, and in her legal minority. The soldier Espartero was acting regent. Her mother had run off to Paris with her savings and her lover; and this child-queen, with her little sister, was left, without other relatives, in the hands of statesmen, politicians, and priests-merely a queen and a pawn on the chess-board. The little queen excited Irving's sympathy, and he soon came to take a deep interest in the drama going on about him. For four years he lived amid the revolutionary alarms, the plottings, the fightings, sieges and the escapades, the changes of ministry, and the endless complications of that disturbed time. He discharged his official duties with admirable tact, prudence, and a real diplomatic address. A minister of less personal reputation, and unknown in Madrid, would have experienced more difficulties. His conduct pleased both governments. I do not dwell upon this period, for although it is a most interesting episode in Irving's life, it has little relation to his literary career. The "Life of Washington" made very little progress.

It is evidence of the weight that Irving's name carried as a citizen at this time, aside from his consideration in literature, that he was called from Madrid to London for consultation on the Oregon boundary difficulty in 1845, and that his efforts contributed to the settlement. Irving was strongly excited on the subject, and deplored the course of the British press in stirring up rancorous prejudice and bitterness between the two nations. "Bulwer," he once exclaimed to the English Minister at Madrid, "I should deplore exceedingly a war with England, for, depend upon it, if we must come to blows it will be serious work for both. You might break our head at first, but, by Heaven! we would break your back in the end."

Irving's joy in returning to Sunnyside was like that of a boy home from school on a vacation. But it was not to a life of idleness that he retired. His leisure had been all spent in his youth, the time of loitering and dreaming with him was in the days usually given to the keenest competition of life. And he was fortunate in this that his old age was a busy one, that he was impelled by the irresistible literary rage to the very last. He had indeed much to do. The "Life of Washington," a task that had been laid upon his mind in early years, must be finished before his departure. But other duties close at hand constantly postponed it.

His attention was first occupied by an addition to the house at Sunnyside, and then by putting his books in a productive train. I am told that for several years, and when the author was at the height of his popularity, his works were virtually out of print. From 1842 to 1848 none were to be bought except stray copies of a cheap Philadelphia edition, and perhaps some of the Paris reprint, in the "collection of ancient and modern British authors," of 1840. The Philadelphia publishers did not think the market warranted a new edition. But Mr. Irving and his friends judged it more wisely. Mr. George P. Putnam, then a young publisher of New York, offered to assume the responsibility, and Mr. Irving made an arrangement with him which was satisfactory to both. The result vindicated the author's confidence, and the publisher's enterprise and sagacity: from July, 1848, to November, 1859, Irving received on his copyrights over eighty-eight thousand dollars. If the relations existing between this author and publisher were universal, we should think the literary millennium close at hand. When business disaster overtook the publisher, Irving stood by him like a brother, and in the end he reaped the benefit of his trust and kindness..

While the revision of his works was going on, the Washington made some progress, but it was occasionally put aside for some tempting literary excursion. Two of these "asides" were the "Biography of Goldsmith" and the "Life of Mahomet." The Goldsmith was enlarged from a sketch made twenty-five years before, and was rapidly thrown off. It is a sympathetic piece of

work, which deserves the popularity it attained and holds. Without being at all a deep study of character, it is, I think, as true a representation of the simple-minded scholar, the vain and lovable author, as ever has been given. The Mahomet has the charm of Irving's style, and is pervaded by his equity of judgment; but it is a little pale beside Gibbon's masterly and virile picture of the Arabian prophet.

There is a certain sad pleasure in reading the memoirs of Irving's last years, enlivened as they were by congenial work, cheered by the affectionate glow of a charming home and the loving assiduities of friends and relatives, and glorified by a fame honorably won. The sadness is in the inevitable withdrawal of comrade after comrade, and the slow setting of the sun. Yet the author preserved to the end his playful humor, his freshness of feeling, his enjoyment of life, his sweet temper towards the world, his delight in beauty. To the last he basked in the sun, and radiated cheerfulness to all around him. I like to read of him, enjoying what he calls a "social outbreak, after a long course of quiet life," at Saratoga, surrounded by old friends and new acquaintances. "There are some very agreeable talking ladies here," writes this charming old gentleman, in his seventieth year, to his niece, "and a great number of very prettylooking ones; two or three with dark Spanish eyes, that I sit and talk to, and look under their dark eyelashes, and think of dear old Spain."

The final volume of the "Life of Washington" was not issued from the press till a few months before his death, but long enough before for him to receive from the best students of the Revolutionary period the warmest testimony to its high merit. It is possible that if it had been composed in earlier years it would have been a more brilliant performance, and in reading it I can see that its placid and moderate tone may mislead as to its real strength. We miss from it certain personal details and the fuller information which memoirs and diaries then unpublished would enable the author to add now. It must be remembered that Irving carried his literary moderation down into an age that demands the vivid, the startling, and the unexpected. It is impossible for any biography to be less pretentious in style, or less ambitious in proclamation. The only pretension of matter is in the early chapters, in which a more than doubtful genealogy is elaborated, and in which it is thought necessary to Washington's dignity to give a fictitious importance to his family and his childhood, and to accept the Southern estimate of the hut in which he was born as a "mansion." In much of this false estimate, Irving was doubtless misled by the fables of Weems. But while he has given us a dignified portrait of Washington, it is as far as possible removed from that of the smileless prig which has begun to weary even the popu-The man he paints is flesh and blood, presented, I believe, with substantial faithfulness to his

character; with a recognition of the defects of his education and the deliberation of his mental operations; with at least a hint of that want of breadth of culture and knowledge of the past, the possession of which characterized many of his great associates; and with no concealment that he had a dower of passions and a temper which only vigorous self-watchfulness kept under. he portrays with an admiration not too highly colored the magnificent patience, the courage to bear misconstruction, the unfailing patriotism, the practical sagacity, the level balance of judgment, combined with the wisest toleration, the dignity of mind, and the lofty moral nature which made him the great man of his epoch. ving's grasp of this character; his lucid marshalling of the scattered, often wearisome and uninteresting details of our dragging, unpicturesque Revolutionary War; his just judgment of men; his even, almost judicial moderation of tone; and his admirable proportion of space to events, render the discussion of style in reference to this work superfluous.

Washington's character is presented as a conception pervading the whole book, and is not projected on any one page in a blaze of adjectives, and under an illumination of colored lights. The method followed is that in the "Life of Columbus," which gives to the reader a truer conception of character than any amount of antithetical parade of qualities. It is to be noted also that the author's judgment of men and events has been little dis-

turbed by subsequent research. There has been nothing added of value to his judicial portraits of Arnold, of André, of Gates, of Lee. That the book raised few controversies may be regarded by some as evidence of its unimportance; it seems to me that time is deciding otherwise. There is no railing at the Provincial Congress, yet we are left in no doubt as to the embarrassments its action caused Washington. There is no scolding about the militia, nor much about the contractors, but we are made aware of the difficulties that beset the unselfish patriots of the time; and what is always delightful in the biography is the tone of calm patriotism, the author's broad love of his native land disfigured by no vulgar partisanship.

With this book Irving's work was finished; and in November, 1859, he took his departure from a world with which he was at peace, to go to another existence in which his faith had rested undisturbed.

I hope that this sketch, imperfect as it is, has given the reader a point of view for an impartial estimate of Irving's literary rank and career. The writer is warned of the futility of attempting to assign to any man of letters his future standing, a matter which experience shows is determined by rules that the critics have not yet discovered. I can only express the belief that Irving's position will be somewhat higher than the present critical estimate of him, and for this I will give a reason or two.

Irving's achievements in pure creation will be more dis-

tinctly recognized when some of his own work and much of contemporary writing falls away. The romantic investiture of the Hudson and the Knickerbocker legend are simply indestructible. The author's service to American letters was of a peculiar kind that cannot be repeated.

He was our first literary man. I use the term in a narrow and technical sense. He was one of the very few in America who have regarded life—not from any practical, reformatory, political, or theologic, but from a literary point of view. The value of this point of view to the world can be maintained; it endures when the others pass away. A man with Irving's gifts is doing mankind more permanent service as an observer, a spectator even, than he could do by active participation in the affairs of the moment.

The measure of such a genius is not altogether that of what we call intellectual force. In regarding Irving's career and in reading his works, he does not impress me as a person of the highest intellectual force, and probably he did not so impress his contemporaries. There is nothing aggressive in his personality. We could name a score of men of this age, some of them now living, to whom we should not compare Irving in point of intellectual vigor. He had little aggressiveness; he had a certain equable breadth of conception and clearness, without close analytic or critical power; internal calm was the necessary condition of his production, criticism chilled him, and the sunshine of approval was necessary

to his literary work. This argues a want of virility; but when we consider his achievements, and the unique position he held in England and America for almost half a century, we begin to think that some element of genius has been left out of our calculation.

No writer of his time had a better sense of literary form and proportion; he seems to have been born with this as with his style, for I find no discipline in his desultory and imperfect education to account for either. His style, which is not an imitation of any, but yet has its affinities with that in vogue two generations ago, and not with our style (if we have any), is in some of his books somewhat too highly polished and annoyingly melodious; but it is natural to the man. It does not weary, and it combines as many of the qualities that make what we call "charm" in lighter literature as any in our tongue.

Irving's books are quite free from the unrest of these times, and there is a total absence in them of the intellectual strain which characterizes nearly all the writing of the past thirty years. He was in many respects a man of another age; his writings lead to reflective enjoyment, and have little in them stimulating. His belief in the supernatural was never disturbed, his faith in God was simple, his love of humanity was clouded by no pessimistic doubts. The dawning realism perhaps he did not at all apprehend. It must be confessed that he was an idealist, and it is fortunate that he was, for I do

not believe that the world has yet done with the literature which bears that stamp.

Irving has been reproached with being an "English" writer. The truth is that he was, in his pure literary capacity, cosmopolitan. Nothing can be more purely American than his treatment of American subjects, and if in Italy, in England, in Spain, he caught the local color and tone, he was only doing what literary art demands. But in all that he wrote, under all surface color and local infusion, there is always discernible the one uniform quality, the unmistakable individual style of Irving.

I should be untrue to my own conception of one of the most potent forces in Irving's literature, if I did not speak of his moral quality; and I may be permitted to repeat what I have said elsewhere. There is something that made Scott and Irving personally loved by the millions of their readers who had only the dimmest ideas of their personality. This was some quality perceived in what they wrote. Each one can define it for himself; there it is, and I do not see why it is not as integral a part of the authors—an element in the estimate of their future position—as what we term their intellect, their knowledge, their skill, or their art. However you rate it, you cannot account for Irving's influence in the world without it. In his tender tribute to Irving, the greathearted Thackeray, who saw as clearly as anybody the place of mere literary art in the sum total of life, quoted the dying words of Scott to Lockhart, "Be a good man,

my dear." We know well enough that the great author of The Newcomes and the great author of The Heart of Midlothian recognized the abiding value in literature of integrity, sincerity, purity, charity, faith. These are beneficences; and Irving's literature, walk round it and measure it by whatever critical instruments you will, is a beneficent literature. The author loved good women and little children and a pure life; he had faith in his fellowmen, a kindly sympathy with the lowest, without any subservience to the highest; he retained a belief in the possibility of chivalrous actions, and did not care to envelop them in a cynical suspicion; he was an author still capable of an enthusiasm. His books are wholesome, full of sweetness and charm, of humor without any sting, of amusement without any stain; and their more solid qualities are marred by neither pedantry nor pretension.

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LIFE, CHARACTER, AND GENIUS

O**F**

WASHINGTON IRVING.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.





A DISCOURSE

ON THE LIFE, CHARACTER, AND GENIUS OF WASHINGTON IRVING, DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC, IN NEW YORK, ON THE 3D OF APRIL, 1860,

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.



E have come together, my friends, on the birthday of an illustrious citizen of our republic, but so recent is his departure from among us,

that our assembling is rather an expression of sorrow for his death than of congratulation that such a man was born into the world. His admirable writings, the beautiful products of his peculiar genius, remain, to be the enjoyment of the present and future generations. We keep the recollection of his amiable and blameless life, and his kindly manners, and for these we give thanks; but the thought will force itself upon us that the light of his friendly eye is quenched, that we must no more hear his beloved voice, nor take his welcome hand. It is as if some genial year had just closed and left us in frost and gloom; its flowery spring, its leafy summer, its plenteous autumn, flown, never to return. Its gifts are strewn around us; its harvests are in our garners; but its season of

bloom, and warmth, and fruitfulness is past. We look around us and see that the sunshine, which filled the golden ear and tinged the reddening apple, brightens the earth no more.

Twelve years since, the task was assigned me to deliver the funeral eulogy of Thomas Cole, the great father of landscape painting in America, the artist who first taught the pencil to portray, with the boldness of nature, our wild forests and lake shores, our mountain regions and the borders of our majestic rivers. Five years later I was bidden to express, in such terms as I could command, the general sorrow which was felt for the death of Fenimore Cooper, equally great and equally the leader of his countrymen in a different walk of creative genius. grave has been opened, and he who has gone down to it, earlier than they in his labors and his fame, was, like them, foremost in the peculiar walk to which his genius attracted him. Cole was taken from us in the zenith of his manhood; Cooper, when the sun of life had stooped from its meridian. In both instances the day was darkened by the cloud of death before the natural hour of its close; but Irving was permitted to behold its light until, in the fulness of time and by the ordinary appointment of nature, it was carried below the horizon.

Washington Irving was born in New York, on the third of April, 1783, but a few days after the news of the treaty with Great Britain, acknowledging our independence, had been received, to the great contentment of the people. He

opened his eyes to the light, therefore, just in the dawn of that Sabbath of peace which brought rest to the land after a weary seven years' war-just as the city of which he was a native, and the republic of which he was yet to be the ornament, were entering upon a career of greatness and prosperity of which those who inhabited them could scarce have dreamed. It seems fitting that one of the first births of the new peace, so welcome to the country, should be that of a genius as kindly and fruitful as peace itself, and destined to make the world better and happier by its gentle influences.\ In one respect, those who were born at that time had the advantage of those who are educated under the more vulgar influences of the present age. Before their eyes were placed, in the public actions of the men who achieved our revolution, noble examples of steady rectitude, magnanimous self-denial, and cheerful self-sacrifice for the sake of their country. Irving came into the world when these great and virtuous men were in the prime of their manhood, and passed his youth in the midst of that general reverence which gathered round them as they grew old.

William Irving, the father of the great author, was a native of Scotland—one of a race in which the instinct of veneration is strong—and a Scottish woman was employed as a nurse in his household. It is related that one day while she was walking in the street with her little charge, then five years old, she saw General Washington in a shop, and, entering, led up the boy, whom she presented

as one to whom his name had been given. The general turned, laid his hand on the child's head, and gave him his smile and his blessing, little thinking that they were bestowed upon his future biographer. The gentle pressure of that hand Irving always remembered, and that blessing, he believed, attended him through life. Who shall say what power that recollection may have had in keeping him true to high and generous aims?

At the time that Washington Irving was born, the city of New York contained scarcely more than twenty thousand inhabitants. During the war its population had The town was scarcely built up probably diminished. to Warren street; Broadway, a little beyond, was lost among grassy pastures and tilled fields; the Park, in which now stands our City Hall, was an open common, and beyond it gleamed, in a hollow among the meadows, a little sheet of fresh water, the Kolch, from which a sluggish rivulet stole through the low grounds, called Lispenard's Meadows, and following the course of what is now Canal street, entered the Hudson. With the exception of the little corner of the island below the present City Hall, the rural character of the whole region was unchanged, and the fresh air of the country entered New York at every street. The town at that time contained a mingled population, drawn from different countries; but the descendants of the old Dutch settlers formed a large proportion of the inhabitants, and these preserved many of their peculiar customs, and had not ceased to use the

speech of their ancestors at their firesides. Many of them lived in the quaint old houses, built of small yellow bricks from Holland, with their notched gable-ends on the streets, which have since been swept away with the language of those who built them.

In the surrounding country, along its rivers and beside (its harbors, and in many parts far inland, the original character of the Dutch settlements was still less changed. Here they read their Bibles, and said their prayers, and listened to sermons in the ancestral tongue. Remains of this language yet linger in a few neighborhoods; but in most, the common schools, and the irruptions of the Yankee race, and the growth of a population newly derived from Europe, have stifled the ancient utterances of New Amsterdam. I remember that twenty years since the market people of Bergen chattered Dutch in the steamers which brought them in the early morning to New York. I remember also that, about ten years before, there were families in the westernmost towns of Massachusetts where Dutch was still the household tongue, and matrons of the English stock, marrying into them, were laughed at for speaking it so badly.

It will be readily inferred that the isolation in which the use of a language, strange to the rest of the country, placed these people, would form them to a character of peculiar simplicity, in which there was a great deal that was quaint and not a little that would appear comic to their neighbors of the Anglo-Saxon stock. It was among such a popula-

tion, friendly and hospitable, wearing their faults on the outside, and living in homely comfort on their fertile and ample acres, that the boyhood and early youth of Irving were passed. He began, while yet a stripling, to wander about the surrounding country, for the love of rambling was the most remarkable peculiarity of that period of his life. He became, as he himself writes, familiar with all the neighboring places famous in history or fable, knew every spot where a murder or a robbery had been committed or a ghost seen; strolled into the villages, noted their customs and talked with their sages, a welcome guest, doubtless, with his kindly and ingenuous manners and the natural playful turn of his conversation.

I dwell upon these particulars because they help to show here how the mind of Irving was trained, and by what process he made himself master of the materials afterwards wrought into the forms we so much admire. It was in these rambles that his strong love of nature was awakened and nourished. Those who only know the island of New York as it now is, see few traces of the beauty it wore before it was levelled and smoothed from side to side for the builder. Immediately without the little town, it was charmingly diversified with heights and hollows, groves alternating with sunny openings, shining tracks of rivulets, quiet country-seats with trim gardens, broad avenues of trees, and lines of pleached hawthorn hedges. I came to New York in 1825, and I well recollect how much I admired the shores of the Hudson above Canal

street, where the dark rocks jutted far out in the water, with little bays between, above which drooped forest trees overrun with wild vines. No less beautiful were the shores of the East River, where the orchards of the Stuyvesant Estate reached to cliffs beetling over the water, and still further on were inlets between rocky banks bristling with red cedars. Some idea of this beauty may be formed from looking at what remains of the natural shore of New York island where the tides of the East River rush to and fro by the rocky verge of Jones's Wood:

Here wandered Irving in his youth, and allowed the aspect of that nature which he afterwards portrayed so well to engrave itself on his heart; but his excursions were not confined to this island. He became familiar with the banks of the Hudson, the extraordinary beauty of which he was the first to describe. He made acquaintance with the Dutch neighborhoods sheltered by its hills, Nyack, Haverstraw, Sing Sing and Sleepy Hollow, and with the majestic Highlands beyond. His rambles in another direction led him to ancient Communipaw, lying in its quiet recess by New York Bay; to the then peaceful Gowanus, now noisy with the passage of visitors to Greenwood and thronged with funerals; to Hoboken, Horsimus and Paulus Hook, which has since become a city. A ferry-boat dancing on the rapid tides took him over to Brooklyn, now our flourishing and beautiful neighbor city; then a cluster of Dutch farms, whose possessors lived in broad, low houses, with stoops in front, overshadowed by trees.

The generation with whom Irving grew up read the "Spectator" and the "Rambler," the essays and tales of Mackenzie and those of Goldsmith; the novels of the day were those of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett; the religious world were occupied with the pages of Hannah More, fresh from the press, and with the writings of Doddridge; politicians sought their models of style and reasoning in the speeches of Burke and the writings of Mackintosh and Junius. These were certainly masters of whom no pupil needed to be ashamed, but it can hardly be said that the style of Irving was formed in the school of any of them. His father's library was enriched with authors of the Elizabethan age, and he delighted, we are told, in reading Chaucer and Spenser. The elder of these great poets might have taught him the art of heightening his genial humor with poetic graces, and from both he might have learned a freer mastery over his native English than the somewhat formal taste of that day encouraged. Cowper's poems, at that time, were in everybody's hands, and if his father had not those of Burns, we must believe that he was no Scotchman. I think we may fairly infer that if the style of Irving took a bolder range than was allowed in the way of writing which prevailed when he was a youth, it was owing, in a great degree, to his studies in the poets, and especially in those of the earlier English literature.

He owed little to the schools, though he began to attend them early. His first instructions were given when

he was between four and six years old, by Mrs. Ann Kilmaster, at her school in Ann street, who seems to have had some difficulty in getting him through the alphabet. In 1789, he was transferred to a school in Fulton street, then called Partition street, kept by Benjamin Romaine, who had been a soldier in the Revolution—a sensible man and a good disciplinarian, but probably an indifferent scholar—and here he continued till he was fourteen years of age. He was a favorite with the master, but preferred reading to regular study. At ten years of age he delighted in the wild tales of Ariosto, as translated by Hoole; at eleven, he was deep in books of voyages and travels, which he took to school and read by stealth. At that time he composed with remarkable ease and fluency, and exchanged tasks with the other boys, writing their compositions, while they solved his problems in arithmetic, which he detested. At the age of thirteen he tried his hand at composing a play, which was performed by children at a friend's house, and of which he afterwards forgot every part, even the title.

Romaine gave up teaching in 1797, and in that year Irving entered a school kept in Beekman street, by Jonathan Irish, probably the most accomplished of his instructors. He left this school in March, 1798, but continued for a time to receive private lessons from the same teacher, at home. Dr. Francis, in his pleasant reminiscences of Irving's early life, speaks of him as preparing to enter Columbia College, and as being prevented by the

state of his health; but it is certain that an indifference to the acquisition of learning had taken possession of him at that age, which he afterwards greatly regretted.

At the age of sixteen he entered his name as a student at law in the office of Josiah Ogden Hoffman, an eminent advocate, who, in later life, became a judge in one of our principal tribunals. It was while engaged in his professional studies that he made his first appearance as an author. I should have mentioned, among the circumstances that favored the unfolding of his literary capacities, that two of his elder brothers were men of decided literary tastes, William Irving, some seventeen years his senior, and Dr. Peter Irving, who, in the year 1802, founded a daily paper in New York, at a time when a daily paper was not, as now, an enterprise requiring a large outlay of capital, but an experiment that might be tried and abandoned with little risk. Dr. Irving established the Morning Chronicle, and his younger brother contributed a series of essays, bearing the signature of Jonathan Oldstyle, of which Mr. Duyckinck, whose judgment I willingly accept, says that they show how early he acquired the style which so much charms us in his later writings.

In 1804, having reached the age of twenty-one, Irving, alarmed by an increasing weakness of the chest, visited Europe for the sake of his health. He sailed directly to the south of France, landed at Bordeaux in May, and passed two months in Genoa, where he embarked for

Messina, in search of a softer climate than any to be found on the Italian peninsula. While at Messina, he saw the fleet of Nelson sweeping by that port on its way to fight the great naval battle of Trafalgar. He made the tour of Sicily, and crossing from Palermo to Naples, proceeded to Rome. Here he formed the acquaintance of Washington Allston, who was then entering on a career of art as extraordinary as that of Irving in literature. With Allston he made long rambles in the picturesque neighborhood of that old city, visited the galleries of its palaces and villas, and studied their works of art with a delight that rose to enthusiasm. He thought of the dry pursuit of the law which awaited his return to America, and for which he had no inclination, and almost determined to be a painter. Allston encouraged him in this disposition, and together they planned the scheme of a life devoted to the pursuit of art. It was fortunate for the world that, as Irving reflected on the matter, doubts arose in his mind which tempered his enthusiasm, and led him to a different destiny. The two friends separated, each to take his own way to renown-Allston to become one of the greatest of painters, and Irving to take his place among the greatest of authors. Leaving Italy, Irving passed through Switzerland to France, resided in Paris several months, travelled through Flanders and Holland, went to England, and returned to his native country in 1806, after an absence of two years.

At the close of the year he was admitted to practice as

an attorney-at-law. He opened an office, but it could not be said that he ever became a practitioner. He began the year 1807 with the earliest of those literary labors which have won him the admiration of the world. On the 24th of January appeared, in the form of a small pamphlet, the first number of a periodical entitled "Salmagundi," the joint production of himself, his brother William, and James K. Paulding. The elder brother contributed the poetry, with hints and outlines for some of the essays, but nearly all the prose was written by the two younger associates.

William Irving, however, had talent enough to have taken a more important part in the work. He was a man of wit, well educated, well informed, and the author of many clever things written for the press, in a vein of good-natured satire and published without his name. He was held in great esteem on account of his personal character, and had great weight in Congress, of which he was for some years a member.*

When "Salmagundi" appeared, the quaint old Dutch town in which Irving was born had become transformed to a comparatively gay metropolis. Its population of twenty thousand souls had enlarged to more than eighty thousand, although its aristocratic class had yet their residences in what seems now to us the narrow space between the Battery and Wall street. The modes and

^{*} See a brief but well-written memoir of William Irving by Dr. Berrian.

fashions of Europe were imported fresh and fresh. "Salmagundi" speaks of leather breeches as all the rage for a morning dress, and flesh-colored smalls for an evening party. Gay equipages dashed through the streets. A new theatre had risen in Park Row, on the boards of which Cooper, one of the finest declaimers, was performing to crowded houses. The churches had multiplied faster than the places of amusement; other public buildings of a magnificence hitherto unknown, including our present City Hall, had been erected; Tammany Hall, fresh from the hands of the builder, overlooked the Park. We began to affect a taste for pictures, and the rooms of Michael Paff, the famous German picture dealer in Broadway, were a favorite lounge for such connoisseurs as we then had, who amused themselves with making him talk of Michael Angelo. Ballston Springs were the great fashionable watering-place of the country, to which resorted the planters of the South with splendid equipages and troops of shining blacks in livery.

"Salmagundi" satirized the follies and ridiculed the humors of the time with great prodigality of wit and no less exuberance of good nature. In form it resembles the "Tattler," and that numerous brood of periodical papers to which the success of the "Tattler" and "Spectator" gave birth; but it is in no sense an imitation. Its gaiety is its own; its style of humor is not that of Addison nor Goldsmith, though it has all the genial spirit of theirs; nor is it borrowed from any other writer. It is far more

frolicsome and joyous, yet tempered by a native gracefulness. "Salmagundi" was manifestly written without the fear of criticism before the eyes of the authors, and to this sense of perfect freedom in the exercise of their genius the charm is probably owing which makes us still read it with so much delight. Irving never seemed to place much value on the part he contributed to this work, yet I doubt whether he ever excelled some of those papers in "Salmagundi" which bear the most evident marks of his style, and Paulding, though he has since acquired a reputation by his other writings, can hardly be said to have written anything better than the best of those which are ascribed to his pen.

Just before "Salmagundi" appeared, several of the authors who gave the literature of England its present character had begun to write. For five years the quarterly issues of the Edinburgh Review, then in the most brilliant period of its existence, had been before the public. Hazlitt had taken his place among the authors, and John Foster had published his essays. Of the poets, Rogers, Campbell and Moore were beginning to be popular; Wordsworth had published his "Lyrical Ballads," Scott, his "Lay of the Last Minstrel," Southey, his "Madoc," and Joanna Baillie two volumes of her plays. In this revival of the creative power in literature it is pleasant to see that our own country took part, contributing a work of a character as fresh and original as any they produced on the other side of the Atlantic.

Nearly two years afterwards, in the autumn of 1809, appeared in the Evening Post, addressed to the humane, an advertisement requesting information concerning a small elderly gentleman named Knickerbocker, dressed in a black coat and cocked hat, who had suddenly left his lodgings at the Columbian Hotel in Mulberry street, and had not been heard of afterwards. In the beginning of November, a "Traveller" communicated to the same journal the information that he had seen a person answering to this description, apparently fatigued with his journey, resting by the road-side a little north of Kingsbridge. Ten days later Seth Handaside, the landlord of the Columbian Hotel, gave notice, through the same journal, that he had found in the missing gentleman's chamber "a curious kind of written book," which he should print by way of reimbursing himself for what his lodger owed him. In December following, Inskeep and Bradford, booksellers, published "Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York."

"Salmagundi" had prepared the public to receive this work with favor, and Seth Handaside had no reason to regret having undertaken its publication. I recollect well its early and immediate popularity. I was then a youth in college, and having committed to memory a portion of it to repeat as a declamation before my class, I was so overcome with laughter, when I appeared on the floor, that I was unable to proceed, and drew upon myself the rebuke of the tutor.

I have just read this "History of New York" over again, and I found myself no less delighted than when I first turned its pages in my early youth. When I compare it with other works of wit and humor of a similar length, I find that, unlike most of them, it carries forward the reader to the conclusion without weariness or satiety, so unsought, spontaneous, self-suggested are the wit and the humor. The author makes us laugh, because he can no more help it than we can help laughing. | Scott, in one of his letters, compared the humor of this work to that of Swift. The rich vein of Irving's mirth is of a quality quite distinct from the dry drollery of Swift, but they have this in common, that they charm by the utter absence of effort, and this was probably the ground of Scott's remark. A critic in the London Quarterly, some years after its appearance, spoke of it as a "tantalizing book," on account of his inability to understand what he called "the point of many of the allusions in this political satire." I fear he must have been one of those respectable persons who find it difficult to understand a joke unless it be accompanied with a commentary opening and explaining it to the humblest capacity. Scott found no such difficulty. "Our sides," he says, in a letter to Mr. Brevoort, a friend of Irving, written just after he had read the book, "are absolutely sore with laughing." The mirth of the "History of New York" is of the most transparent sort, and the author, even in the later editions, judiciously abstained from any attempt to make it more intelligible by notes.

I find in this work more manifest traces than in his other writings of what Irving owed to the earlier authors in our language. The quaint poetic coloring, and often the phraseology, betray the disciple of Chaucer and Spenser. We are conscious of a flavor of the olden time, as of a racy wine of some rich vintage—

"Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth."

I will not say that there are no passages in this work which are not worthy of their context; that we do not sometimes meet with phraseology which we could wish changed, that the wit does not sometimes run wild, and drop here and there a jest which we could willingly spare. We forgive, we overlook, we forget all this as we read, in consideration of the entertainment we have enjoyed, and of that which beckons us onward in the next page. Of all mock-heroic works, "Knickerbocker's History of New York" is the gayest, the airiest, and the least tiresome.

In 1848 Mr. Irving issued an edition of this work, to which he prefixed what he called an "Apology," intended in part as an answer to those who thought he had made too free with the names of our old Dutch families. To speak frankly, I do not much wonder that the descendants of the original founders of New Amsterdam should have hardly known whether to laugh or look grave on finding the names of their ancestors, of whom they never thought but with respect, now connected with ludicrous associations, by a wit of another race. In one of his excellent

historical discourses Mr. Verplanck had gently complained of this freedom, expressing himself, as he said, more in sorrow than in anger. Even the sorrow, I believe, must have long since wholly passed away, when it is seen how little Irving's pleasantries have detracted from the honor paid to the early history of our city—at all events, I do not see how it could survive Irving's good-humored and graceful Apology.

It was not long after the publication of the "History of New York" that Irving abandoned the profession of law, for which he had so decided a distaste as never to have fully tried his capacity for pursuing it. Two of his brothers were engaged in commerce, and they received him as a silent partner. He did not, however, renounce his literary occupations. He wrote, in 1810, a memoir of Campbell, the poet, prefaced to an edition of the writings of that author, which appeared in Philadelphia; and in 1813 and the following year, employed himself as editor of the Analectic Magazine, published in the same city; making the experiment of his talent for a vocation to which men of decided literary tastes in this country are strongly inclined to betake themselves. Those who remember this magazine cannot have forgotten that it was a most entertaining miscellany, partly compiled from English publications, mostly periodicals, and partly made up of contributions of some of our own best writers. Paulding wrote for it a series of biographical accounts of the naval commanders of the United States,

which added greatly to its popularity; and Verplanck contributed memoirs of Commodore Stewart and General Scott, Barlow, the poet, and other distinguished Americans, which were received with favor. The life of Campbell, with the exception perhaps of some less important contributions to the magazine, is the only published work of Irving between the appearance of the "History of New York," in 1809, and that of the "Sketch-Book," in 1819.

It was during this interval that an event took place which had a marked influence on Irving's future life, affected the character of his writings, and, now that the death of both parties allows it to be spoken of without reserve, gives a peculiar interest to his personal history. He became attached to a young lady whom he was to have married. She died unwedded, in the flower of her age; there was a sorrowful leave-taking between her and her lover, as the grave was about to separate them on the eve of what should have been her bridal; and Irving, ever after, to the close of his life, tenderly and faithfully cherished her memory. In one of the biographical notices published immediately after Irving's death, an old, well-worn copy of the Bible is spoken of, which was kept lying on the table in his chamber, within reach of his bedside, bearing her name on the title-page in a delicate female hand—a relic which we may presume to have been his constant companion. Those who are fond of searching, in the biographies of eminent men, for the circumstances which determined the bent of their genius, find in this sad event, and the cloud it threw over the hopeful and cheerful period of early manhood, an explanation of the transition from the unbounded playfulness of the "History of New York" to the serious, tender, and meditative vein of the "Sketch-Book."

In 1815, soon after our second peace with Great Britain, Irving sailed again for Europe, and fixed himself at Liverpool, where a branch of the large commercial house to which he belonged was established. His old love of rambling returned upon him; he wandered first into Wales, and over some of the finest counties of England, and then northward to the sterner region of the Scottish Highlands. His memoir of Campbell had procured him the acquaintance and friendship of that poet. Campbell gave him, more than a year after his arrival in England, a letter of introduction to Scott, who, already acquainted with him by his writings, welcomed him warmly to Abbotsford, and made him his friend for life. Scott sent a special message to Campbell, thanking him for having made him known to Irving. "He is one of the best and pleasantest acquaintances," said Scott, "that I have made this many a day."

In the same year that he visited Abbotsford his brothers failed. The changes which followed the peace of 1815 swept away their fortunes and his together, and he was now to begin the world anew.

In 1819, he began to publish the "Sketch-Book." It was

written in England and sent over to New York, where it was issued by Van Winkle, in octavo numbers, containing from seventy to a hundred pages. In the preface he remarked that he was "unsettled in his abode," that he had "his cares and vicissitudes," and could not, therefore, give these papers the "tranquil attention necessary to finished composition." Several of them were copied with praise in the London Literary Gazette, and an intimation was conveyed to the author, that some person in London was about to publish them entire. He preferred to do this himself, and accordingly offered the work to the famous bookseller, Murray. Murray was slow in giving the matter his attention, and Irving, after a reasonable delay, wrote to ask that the copy which he had left with him might be returned. It was sent back with a note, pleading excess of occupation, the great cross of all eminent booksellers, and alleging the "want of scope in the nature of the work," as a reason for declining it. was discouraging, but Irving had the enterprise to print the first volume in London, at his own risk. It was issued by John Miller, and was well received, but in a month afterward the publisher failed. Immediately Sir Walter Scott came to London and saw Murray, who allowed himself to be persuaded, the more easily, doubtless, on account of the partial success of the first volume, that the work had more "scope" than he supposed, and purchased the copyright of both volumes for two hundred pounds, which he afterwards liberally raised to four hundred.

Whoever compares the "Sketch-Book" with the "History of New York" might at first, perhaps, fail to recognize it as the work of the same hand, so much graver and more thoughtful is the strain in which it is written. A more attentive examination, however, shows that the humor in the lighter parts is of the same peculiar and original cast, wholly unlike that of any author who ever wrote, a humor which Mr. Dana happily characterized as "a fanciful playing with common things, and here and there beautiful touches, till the ludicrous becomes half picturesque." Yet one cannot help perceiving that the author's spirit had been sobered since he last appeared before the public, as if the shadow of a great sorrow had fallen upon it. The greater number of the papers are addressed to our deeper sympathies, and some of them, as, for example, the Broken Heart, the Widow and Her Son, and Rural Funerals, dwell upon the saddest themes. Only in two of them—Rip Van Winkle and the Legend of Sleepy Hollow —does he lay the reins loose on the neck of his frolicsome fancy, and allow it to dash forward without restraint; and these rank among the most delightful and popular tales ever written. In our country they have been read, I believe, by nearly everybody who can read at all.

The "Sketch-Book," and the two succeeding works of Irving, "Bracebridge Hall" and the "Tales of a Traveller," abound with agreeable pictures of English life, seen under favorable lights and sketched with a friendly pencil. Let me say here, that it was not to pay court to

the English that he thus described them and their country; it was because he could not describe them otherwise. It was the instinct of his mind to attach itself to the contemplation of the good and the beautiful, wherever he found them, and to turn away from the sight of what was evil, misshapen, and hateful. His was not a nature to pry for faults, or disabuse the world of good-natured mistakes; he looked for virtue, love, and truth among men, and thanked God that he found them in such large measure. If there are touches of satire in his writings, he is the best-natured and most amiable of satirists, amiable beyond Horace; and in his irony—for there is a vein of playful irony running through many of his works—there is no tinge of bitterness.

I rejoice, for my part, that we have had such a writer as Irving to bridge over the chasm between the two great nations—that an illustrious American lived so long in England, and was so much beloved there, and sought so earnestly to bring the people of the two countries to a better understanding with each other, and to wean them from the animosities of narrow minds. I am sure that there is not a large-minded and large-hearted man in all our country who can read over the "Sketch-Book" and the other writings of Irving, and disown one of the magnanimous sentiments they express with regard to England, or desire to abate the glow of one of his warm and cheerful pictures of English life. Occasions will arise, no doubt, for saying some things in a less accommodating

spirit, and there are men enough on both sides of the Atlantic who can say them; but Irving was not sent into the world on that errand. A different work was assigned him in the very structure of his mind, and the endowments of his heart—a work of peace and brotherhood, and I will say for him that he nobly performed it.

Let me pause here to speak of what I believe to have been the influence of the "Sketch-Book" upon American literature. At the time it appeared the periodical lists of new American publications were extremely meagre, and consisted, to a great extent, of occasional pamphlets and dissertations on the questions of the day. The works of greater pretension were, for the most part, crudely and languidly made up, and destined to be little read. A work like the "Sketch-Book," welcomed on both sides of the Atlantic, showed the possibility of an American author acquiring a fame bounded only by the limits of his own language, and gave an example of the qualities by which it might be won. Within two years afterwards we had Cooper's "Spy" and Dana's "Idle Man;" the press of our country began, by degrees, to teem with works composed with a literary skill and a spirited activity of intellect until then little known among us. Every year the assertion that we had no literature of our own became less and less true: and now, when we look over a list of new works by native authors, we find, with an astonishment amounting almost to alarm, that the most voracious devourer of books must despair of being able to



read half those which make a fair claim upon his attention. It was since 1819 that the great historians of our country, whose praise is in the mouths of all the nations, began to write. One of them built up the fabric of his fame long after Irving appeared as an author, and slept with Herodotus two years before Irving's death; another of the band lives yet to be the ornament of the association before which I am called to speak, and is framing the annals of his country into a work for future ages. Within that period has arisen among us the class who hold vast multitudes spell-bound in motionless attention by public discourses, the most perfect of their kind, such as make the fame of Everett. Within that period our theologians have learned to write with the elegance and vivacity of the essayists. We had but one novelist before the era of the "Sketch-Book;" their number is now beyond enumeration by any but a professed cataloguemaker, and many of them are read in every cultivated form of human speech. Those whom we acknowledge as our poets - one of whom is the special favorite of our brothers in language who dwell beyond sea—appeared in the world of letters and won its attention after Irving had become famous. We have wits, and humorists, and amusing essayists, authors of some of the airiest and most graceful compositions of the present century, and we owe them to the new impulse given to our literature in 1819. I look abroad on these stars of our literary firmanent—some crowded together with their minute points

of light in a galaxy—some standing apart in glorious constellations; I recognize Arcturus, and Orion, and Perseus, and the glittering jewels of the Southern Crown, and the Pleiades shedding sweet influences; but the Evening Star, the soft and serene light that glowed in their van, the precursor of them all, has sunk below the horizon. The spheres, meantime, perform their appointed courses; the same motion which lifted them up to the mid-sky bears them onward to their setting; and they, too, like their bright leader, must soon be carried by it below the earth.

Irving went to Paris in 1820, where he passed the remainder of the year and part of the next, and where he became acquainted with the poet Moore, who frequently mentions him in his Diary. Moore and he were much in each other's company, and the poet has left on record an expression of his amazement at the rapidity with which "Bracebridge Hall" was composed—one hundred and thirty pages in ten days. The winter of 1822 found him in Dresden. In that year was published "Bracebridge Hall," the groundwork of which is a charming description of country life in England, interspersed with narratives, the scene of which is laid in other countries. Of these, the Norman tale of "Annette Delarbre" seems to me the most beautiful and affecting thing of its kind in all his works; so beautiful, indeed, that I can hardly see how he who has once read it can resist the desire to read it again. In "Bracebridge Hall" we have the Stout Gentleman, full of certain minute paintings of familiar objects, where not a single touch is thrown in that does not heighten the comic effect of the narrative. If I am not greatly mistaken, the most popular novelists of the day have learned from this pattern the skill with which they have wrought up some of their most striking passages, both grave and gay. In composing "Bracebridge Hall," Irving showed that he had not forgotten his native country; and in the pleasant tale of Dolph Heyliger he went back to the banks of that glorious river beside which he was born.

In 1823, Irving, still a wanderer, returned to Paris, and in the year following gave the world his "Tales of a Traveller." Murray, in the meantime, had become fully weaned from the notion that Irving's writings lacked the quality which he called "scope," for he had paid a thousand guineas for the copyright of "Bracebridge Hall," and now offered fifteen hundred pounds for the "Tales of a Traveller," which Irving accepted. "He might have had two thousand," says Moore, but this assembly will not, I hope, think the worse of him, if it be acknowledged that the world contained men who were sharper than he at driving a bargain. The "Tales of a Traveller" are most remarkable for their second part, entitled "Buckthorn and his Friends," in which the author introduces us to literary life in its various aspects, as he had observed it in London, and to the relations in which authors at that time stood to the booksellers.

sketches of the different personages are individual, characteristic and diverting, yet with what a kindly pencil they are all drawn! His good nature overspreads and harmonizes everything, like the warm atmosphere which so much delights us in a painting.

Irving, still "unsettled in his abode," passed the winter of 1825 in the south of France. When you are in that region you see the snowy summits of the Spanish Pyrenees looking down upon you; Spanish visitors frequent the watering-places; Spanish peddlers, in their handsome costume, offer you the fabrics of Barcelona and Valencia; Spanish peasants come to the fairs; the traveller feels himself almost in Spain already, and is haunted by the desire of visiting that remarkable country. To Spain Irving went in the latter part of the year, invited by our Minister at Madrid, Alexander H. Everett, at the suggestion of Mr. Rich, the American Consul, an industrious and intelligent collector of Spanish works relating to America. His errand was to translate into English the documents relating to the discovery and early history of our Continent, collected by the research of Navarrete. He passed the winter of 1826 at the Spanish capital, as the guest of Mr. Rich; the following season took him to Granada, and he lingered awhile in that beautiful region, profusely watered by the streams that break from the Snowy Ridge. In 1827, he again visited the south of Spain, gathering materials for his "Life of Columbus," which, immediately after his arrival in Spain, he had determined to write, instead of translating the documents of Navarrete. In Spain he began and finished that work after having visited the places associated with the principal events in the life of his hero. Murray was so well satisfied with its "scope" that he gave him three thousand guineas for the copyright, and laid it before the public in 1828. Like the other works of Irving's, it was published here at the same time as in London.

The "Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus" placed Irving among the historians, for the biography of that great discoverer is a part, and a remarkable part, of the history of the world. Of what was strictly and simply personal in his adventures, much, of course, has passed into irremediable oblivion; what was both personal and historical is yet outstanding above the shadow that has settled upon the rest. The work of Irving was at once in everybody's hands and eagerly read. rete vouched for its historical accuracy and completeness. Jeffrey declared that no work could ever take its place. It was written with a strong love of the subject, and to this it owes much of its power over the reader. Columbus was one of those who, with all their faculties occupied by one great idea, and bent on making it a practical reality, are looked upon as crazed, and pitied and forgotten if they fail, but if they succeed are venerated as the glory of their age. The poetic elements of his character and history, the grandeur and mystery of his design, his prophetic sagacity, his hopeful and devout

courage, and his disregard of the ridicule of meaner intellects, took a strong hold on the mind of Irving, and formed the inspiration of the work.

Mr. Duyckinck gives, on the authority of one who knew Irving intimately, an instructive anecdote relating to the "Life of Columbus." When the work was nearly finished it was put into the hands of Lieutenant Slidell Mackenzie, himself an agreeable writer, then on a visit to Spain, who read it with a view of giving a critical opinion of its merits. "It is quite perfect," said he, on returning the manuscript, "except the style, and that is unequal." The remark made such an impression on the mind of the author that he wrote over the whole narrative with the view of making the style more uniform, but he afterwards thought that he had not improved it.

In this I have no doubt that Irving was quite right, and that it would have been better if he had never touched the work after he had brought it to the state which satisfied his individual judgment. An author can scarce commit a greater error than to alter what he writes, except when he has a clear perception that the alteration is for the better, and can make it with as hearty a confidence in himself as he felt in giving the work its first shape. What strikes me as an occasional defect in the "Life of Columbus" is this elaborate uniformity of style—a certain prismatic coloring in passages where absolute simplicity would have satisfied us better. It may well be supposed that Irving originally wrote some parts

of the work with the quiet plainness of a calm relater of facts, and others, with the spirit and fire of one who had become warmed with his subject, and this probably gave occasion to what was said of the inequality of the style. The attempt to elevate the diction of the simpler portions, we may suppose, marred what Irving afterwards perceived had really been one of the merits of the work.

In the spring of 1829, Irving made another visit to the south of Spain, collecting materials from which he afterwards composed some of his most popular works. When the traveller now visits Granada and is taken to the Alhambra, his guide will say, "Here is one of the curiosities of the place; this is the chamber occupied by Washington Irving," and he will show an apartment, from the windows of which you have a view of the glorious valley of the Genil, with the mountain peaks overlooking it, and hear the murmur of many mountain brooks at once, as they hurry to the plain. In July of the same year, he repaired to London, where he was to act as Secretary of the American Legation. We had at that time certain controversies with the British government which were the subject of negotiation. Irving took great interest in these, and in some letters which I saw at the time, stated the points in dispute at considerable length and with admirable method and perspicuity. In London he published his "Chronicles of the Conquest of Granada," one of the most delightful of his works, an exact history, for such it is admitted to be by those who have searched most carefully the ancient records of Spain, yet so full of personal incident, so diversified with surprising turns of fortune, and these wrought up with such picturesque effect, that, to use an expression of Pope, a young lady might read it by mistake for a romance. In 1831, he gave the world another work on Spanish history, the "Voyages of the Companions of Columbus," and in the year following the "Alhambra," which is another "Sketch-Book," with the scenes laid in Spain.

While in Spain, Irving had planned a Life of Cortez, the Conqueror of Mexico, and collected the facts from which it was to be written. When, afterwards, he had actually begun the composition of the work, he happened to learn that Prescott designed to write the "History of the Mexican Conquest," and immediately he desisted. It was his intention to interweave with the narrative, descriptions of the ancient customs of the aborigines, such as their modes of warfare and their gorgeous pageants, by way of relief to the sanguinary barbarities of the Conquest. He saw what rich materials of the picturesque these opened to him, and if he had accomplished his plan, he would probably have produced one of his most popular works.

In 1832 Irving returned to New York. He returned, after an absence of seventeen years, to find his native city doubled in population; its once quiet waters alive with sails and furrowed by steamers passing to and fro, its wharves crowded with masts; the heights which surround

it, and which he remembered wild and solitary and lying in forest, now crowned with stately country seats or with dwellings clustered in villages, and everywhere the activity and bustle of a prosperous and hopeful people. And he, too, how had he returned? The young and comparatively obscure author, whose works had only found here and there a reader in England, had achieved a fame as wide as the civilized world. All the trophies he had won in this field he brought home to lay at the feet of his country. Meanwhile all the country was moved to meet him; the rejoicing was universal that one who had represented us so illustriously abroad was henceforth to live among us.

Irving hated public dinners, but he was forced to accept one pressed upon him by his enthusiastic countrymen. It was given at the City Hotel on the 30th of May, Chancellor Kent presiding, and the most eminent citizens of New York assembled at the table. I remember the accounts of this festivity reaching me as I was wandering in Illinois, hovering on the skirts of the Indian war, in a region now populous, but then untilled and waste, and I could only write to Irving and ask leave to add my voice to the general acclamation. In his address at the dinner, Chancellor Kent welcomed the historian of New Amsterdam back to his native city, and Irving, in reply, poured forth his heart in the warmest expressions of delight at finding himself again among his countrymen and kindred, in a land of sunshine and freedom and hope.

"I am asked," he said, "how long I mean to remain here. They know little of my heart who can ask me this question. I answer, as long as I live."

The instinct of rambling had not, however, forsaken In the summer after his return he made a journey to the country west of the Mississippi, in company with Mr. Ellsworth, a commissioner intrusted with the removal of certain Indian tribes, and roamed over wild regions, then the hunting-grounds of the savage, but into which the white man has since brought his plough and his herds. He did not publish his account of this journey until 1835, when it appeared as the first volume of the "Crayon Miscellany," under the title of a "Tour on the Prairies." In this work the original West is described as Irving knew how to describe it, and the narrative is in that vein of easy gaiety peculiar to his writings. botsford and Newstead Abbey" formed the second volume of the "Crayon Miscellany," and to these he afterwards added another, entitled "Legends of the Conquest of Spain."

In 1836 he published "Astoria; or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains;" a somewhat curious example of literary skill. A voluminous commercial correspondence was the dull ore of the earth which he refined and wrought into symmetry and splendor. Irving reduced to a regular narrative the events to which it referred, bringing out the picturesque whenever he found it, and enlivening the whole with touches of his

native humor. His nephew, Pierre M. Irving, lightened his labor materially by examining and collating the letters and making memoranda of their contents. In 1837, he prepared for the press the "Adventures of Captain Bonneville, of the United States Army, in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West." He had the manuscript journal of Bonneville before him, but the hand of Irving is apparent in every sentence.

About the time that this work appeared, Irving was drawn into the only public controversy in which, so far as I know, he ever engaged. William Leggett then conducted a weekly periodical entitled the *Plaindealer*, remarkable both for its ability and its love of disputation. It attacked Mr. Irving for altering a line or two in one of my poems, with a view of making it less offensive to English readers, and for writing a preface to the American edition of his "Tour on the Prairies," full of professions of love for his country, which were studiously omitted from the English edition. From these circumstances the *Plaindealer* drew an inference unfavorable to Irving's sincerity.

I should here mention, and I hope I may do it without much egotism, that when a volume of my poems was published here in the year 1832, Mr. Verplanck had the kindness to send a copy of it to Irving, desiring him to find a publisher for it in England. This he readily engaged to do, though wholly unacquainted with me, and offered the volume to Murray. "Poetry does not sell

at present," said Murray, and declined it. A bookseller in Bond street, named Andrews, undertook its publication, but required that Irving should introduce it with a preface of his own. He did so, speaking of my verses in such terms as would naturally command for them the attention of the public, and allowing his name to be placed in the title-page as the editor. The edition, in consequence, found a sale. It happened, however, that the publisher objected to two lines in a poem called the "Song of Marion's Men." One of them was

"The British soldier trembles,"

and Irving good-naturedly consented that it should be altered to

"The foeman trembles in his camp."

The other alteration was of a similar character.

To the accusations of the *Plaindealer*, Irving replied with a mingled spirit and dignity which almost makes us regret that his faculties were not oftener roused into energy by such collisions, or, at least, that he did not sometimes employ his pen on controverted points. He fully vindicated himself in both instances, showing that he had made the alterations in my poem from a simple desire to do me service, and that with regard to the "Tour on the Prairies," he had sent a manuscript copy of it to England for publication, at the same time that he sent another to the printer here, and that it would have been an absurdity to address the English edition to the

American public. But as this was the first time that he had appeared before his countrymen as an author since his return from Europe, it was but proper that he should express to them the feelings awakened by their generous welcome. "These feelings," he said, "were genuine, and were not expressed with half the warmth with which they were entertained;" an assertion which every reader, I believe, was disposed to receive literally.

In his answer to the *Plaindealer*, some allusions were made to me which seemed to imply that I had taken part in this attack upon him. To remove the impression, I sent a note to the *Plaindealer* for publication, in which I declared in substance that I never had complained of the alterations of my poem—that though they were not such as I should have made, I was certain they were made with the kindest intentions, and that I had no feeling toward Mr. Irving but gratitude for the service he had rendered me. The explanation was graciously accepted, and in a brief note, printed in the *Plaindealer*, Irving pronounced my acquittal.

Several papers were written by Irving in 1839 and the following year, for the *Knickerbocker*, a monthly periodical conducted by his friend, Lewis Gaylord Clark, all of them such as he only could write. They were afterward collected into a volume, entitled "Wolfert's Roost," from the ancient name of that beautiful residence of his on the banks of the Hudson, in which they were mostly written. They were, perhaps, read with more interest in

the volume than in the magazine, just as some paintings of the highest merit are seen with more pleasure in the artist's room than on the walls of an exhibition.

In 1842 he went to Spain as the American Minister. and remained in that country for four years. I have never understood that anything occurred during that time to put his talents as a negotiator to any rigorous He was a sagacious and intelligent observer; his connection with the American Legation in London had given him diplomatic experience, and I have heard that he sent home to his government some valuable despatches on the subject of our relations with Spain. other respects, he did, at least, what all American ministers at the European courts are doing, and I suppose my hearers understand very well what that is; but if there had been any question of importance to be settled, I think he might have acquitted himself as well as many who have had a higher reputation for dexterity in business. When I was at Madrid in 1857, a distinguished Spaniard said to me: "Why does not your government send out Washington Irving to this court? Why do you not take as your agent the man whom all Spain admires, venerates, loves? I assure you, it would be difficult for our government to refuse anything which Irving should ask, and his signature would make almost any treaty acceptable to our people."

Returning in 1846, Irving went back to Sunnyside, on the Hudson, and continued to make it his abode for the rest of his life. Those who passed up and down the river before the year 1835, may remember a neglected cottage on a green bank, with a few locust-trees before it, close to where a little brook brings in its tribute to the mightier stream. In that year Irving became its possessor; he gave it the name it now wears, planted its pleasant slopes with trees and shrubs, laid it out in walks, built outhouses, and converted the cottage into a more spacious dwelling, in the old Dutch style of architecture, with crow-steps on the gables; a quaint, picturesque building, with "as many angles and corners," to use his own words, "as a cocked hat." He caused creeping plants and climbing roses to be trained up its walls; the trees he planted prospered in that sheltered situation, and were filled with birds, which would not leave their nests at the approach of the kind master of the place. The house became almost hidden from sight by their lofty summits, the perpetual rustlings of which, to those who sat within, were blended with the murmurs of the water. Van Tassel would have had some difficulty in recognizing his old abode in this little paradise, with the beauty of which one of Irving's friends * has made the public familiar in prose and verse.

At Sunnyside, Irving wrote his "Life of Oliver Goldsmith." Putnam, the bookseller, had said to him one day: "Here is Foster's 'Life of Goldsmith;' I think of

^{*} H. T. Tuckerman.

republishing it." "I once wrote a Memoir of Goldsmith," answered Irving, "which was prefixed to an edition of his works printed at Paris; and I have thought of enlarging it and making it more perfect." "If you will do that," was the reply of the bookseller, "I shall not republish the Life by Foster." Within three months afterwards, Irving's "Life of Goldsmith" was finished and in press. It was so much superior to the original sketch, in the exactness of the particulars, the entertainment of the anecdotes, and the beauty of the style, that it was really a new For my part, I know of nothing like it. I have read no biographical memoir which carries forward the reader so delightfully and with so little tediousness of recital or reflection. I never take it up without being tempted to wish that Irving had written more works of the kind; but this could hardly be; for where could he have found another Goldsmith?

In 1850 appeared his "Lives of Mahomet and his Successors," composed principally from memoranda made by him during his residence in Spain; and in the same year he completed the revisal of his works for a new edition, which was brought out by Putnam, a bookseller of whose obliging and honorable conduct he delighted to speak. Irving was a man with whom it was not easy to have a misunderstanding; but, even if he had been of a different temper, these commendations would have been none the less deserved.

When Cooper died, toward the close of the year 1850,

Irving, who had not long before met him, apparently in the full vigor of his excellent constitution, was much shocked by the event, and took part in the meetings held for the purpose of collecting funds to erect a monument to his memory in this city—a design which, I am sorry to say, has wholly failed. He wrote a letter advising that the monument should be a statue, and attended the great memorial meeting held in Metropolitan Hall, in February of the next year, at which Webster presided. He was then near the end of his sixty-eighth year, and was remarked as one over whom the last twenty years had passed lightly. He, whom Dr. Francis describes as in early life a slender and delicate youth, preserving his health by habitual daily exercise, appeared before that vast assembly a fresh, well-preserved gentleman scarcely more than elderly, with firm but benevolent features, well-knit and muscular limbs, and an elastic step, the sign of undiminished physical vigor.

In his retirement at Sunnyside, Irving planned and executed his last great work, the "Life of Washington," to which he says he had long looked forward as his crowning literary effort. Constable, the Edinburgh bookseller, had proposed it to him thirty years before, and he then resolved to undertake it as soon as he should return to the United States. It was postponed in favor of other projects, but never abandoned. At length the expected time seemed to have arrived; his other tasks had been successfully performed; the world was waiting for new

works from his pen; his mind and body were yet in their vigor; the habit and the love of literary production yet remained, and he addressed himself to this greatest of his labors.

Yet he had his misgivings, though they could not divert him from his purpose. "They expect too muchtoo much," he said to a friend of mine, to whom he was speaking of the magnitude of the task and the difficulty of satisfying the public. We cannot wonder at these doubts. At the time when he began to employ himself steadily on this work, he was near the age of threescore and ten, when with most men the season of hope and confidence is past. He was like one who should begin the great labor of the day when the sun was shedding his latest beams, and what if the shadows of night should descend upon him before his task was ended? A vast labor had been thrown upon him by the almost numberless documents and papers recently brought to light relating to the events in which Washington was concerned -such as were amassed and digested by the research of Sparks, and accompanied by the commentary of his excellent biography. These were all to be carefully examined and their spirit extracted. Historians had in the meantime arisen in our country, of a world-wide fame, with whose works his own must be compared, and he was to be judged by a public whom he, more than almost any other man, had taught to be impatient of mediocrity.

I do not believe, however, that Irving's task would have

been performed so ably if it had been undertaken when it was suggested by Constable; the narrative could not have been so complete in its facts; it might not have been written with the same becoming simplicity. It was fortunate that the work was delayed till it could be written from the largest store of materials, till its plan was fully matured in all its fair proportions, and till the author's mind had become filled with the profoundest veneration for his subject.

The simplicity already mentioned is the first quality of this work which impresses the reader. Here is a man of genius, a poet by temperament, writing the life of a man of transcendent wisdom and virtue—a life passed amidst great events, and marked by inestimable public services. There is a constant temptation to eulogy, but the temptation is resisted; the actions of his hero are left to speak their own praise. He records events reverently, as one might have recorded them before the art of rhetoric was invented, with no exaggeration, with no parade of reflection; the lessons of the narrative are made to impress themselves on the mind by the earnest and conscientious relation of facts. Meantime the narrator keeps himself in the background, solely occupied with the due presentation of his subject. Our eyes are upon the actors whom he sets before us—we never think of Mr. Irving.

A closer examination reveals another great merit of the work, the admirable proportion in which the author keeps the characters and events of his story. I suppose he could hardly have been conscious of this merit, and that it was attained without a direct effort. Long meditation had probably so shaped and matured the plan in his mind, and so arranged its parts in their just symmetry, that, executing it as he did, conscientiously, he could not have made it a different thing from what we have it. There is nothing distorted, nothing placed in too broad a light or thrown too far in the shade. The incidents of our Revolutionary war, the great event of Washington's life, pass before us as they passed before the eyes of the commander-in-chief himself, and from time to time varied his designs. Washington is kept always in sight, and the office of the biographer is never allowed to become merged in that of the historian.

The men who were the companions of Washington in the field or in civil life, are shown only in their association with him, yet are their characters drawn, not only with skill and spirit, but with a hand that delighted to do them justice. Nothing, I believe, could be more abhorrent to Irving's ideas of the province of a biographer, than the slightest detraction from the merits of others, that his hero might appear the more eminent. So remarkable is his work in this respect, that an accomplished member of the Historical Society,* who has analyzed the merits of the "Life of Washington" with a critical skill which makes me ashamed to speak of the work after him,

^{*} G. W. Greene. "Biographical Studies."

has declared that no writer, within the circle of his reading, "has so successfully established his claim to the rare and difficult virtue of impartiality."

I confess, my admiration of this work becomes the greater the more I examine it. In the other writings of Irving are beauties which strike the reader at once. In this I recognize qualities which lie deeper, and which I was not sure of finding—a rare equity of judgment, a large grasp of the subject, a profound philosophy, independent of philosophical forms, and even instinctively rejecting them, the power of reducing an immense crowd of loose materials to clear and orderly arrangement, and forming them into one grand whole, as a skilful commander, from a rabble of raw recruits, forms a disciplined army, animated and moved by a single will.

The greater part of this last work of Irving was composed while he was in the enjoyment of what might be called a happy old age. This period of his life was not without its infirmities, but his frame was yet unwasted, his intellect bright and active, and the hour of decay seemed distant. He had become more than ever the object of public veneration, and in his beautiful retreat enjoyed all the advantages with few of the molestations of acknowledged greatness; a little too much visited, perhaps, but submitting to the intrusion of his admirers with his characteristic patience and kindness. That retreat had now become more charming than ever, and the domestic life within was as beautiful as the nature with-

out. A surviving brother, older than himself, shared it with him, and several affectionate nephews and nieces stood to him in the relation of sons and daughters. He was surrounded by neighbors who saw him daily, and honored and loved him the more for knowing him so well.

While he was engaged in writing the last pages of his "Life of Washington," his countrymen heard with pain that his health was failing and his strength ebbing away. He completed the work, however, though he was not able to revise the last sheets, and we then heard that his nights had become altogether sleepless. He was himself of opinion that his labors had been too severe for his time of life, and had sometimes feared that the power to continue them would desert him before his work could be finished. A catarrh to which he had been subject, had, by some injudicious prescription, been converted into an asthma, and the asthma, according to the testimony of his physician, Dr. Peters, one of the most attentive and assiduous of his profession, was at length accompanied by an enlargement of the heart. This disease ended in the usual way by a sudden dissolution. On the 28th of November last, in the evening, he had bidden the family good night in his usual kind manner, and had withdrawn to his room, attended by one of his nieces carrying his medicines, when he complained of a sudden feeling of intense sadness, sank immediately into her arms, and died without a struggle.

Although he had reached an age beyond which life is

rarely prolonged, the news of his death was everywhere received with profound sorrow. The whole country mourned, but the grief was most deeply felt in his immediate neighborhood; the little children wept for the loss of their good friend. When the day of his funeral arrived, the people gathered from far and near to attend it; this capital poured forth its citizens; the trains on the railway were crowded, and a multitude, like a mass meeting, but reverentially silent, moved through the streets of the neighboring village, which had been dressed in the emblems of mourning, and clustered about the church and the burial-ground. It was the first day of December; the pleasant Indian summer of our climate had been prolonged far beyond its usual date; the sun shone with his softest splendor and the elements were hushed into a perfect calm; it was like one of the blandest days of October. The hills and forests, the meadows and waters which Irving had loved seemed listening, in that quiet atmosphere, as the solemn funeral service was read.

It was read over the remains of one whose life had well prepared his spirit for its new stage of being. Irving did not aspire to be a theologian, but his heart was deeply penetrated with the better part of religion, and he had sought humbly to imitate the example of the Great Teacher of our faith.

That amiable character which makes itself so manifest in the writings of Irving was seen in all his daily actions. He was ever ready to do kind offices, tender of the feelings of others, carefully just, but ever leaning to the merciful side of justice, averse from strife, and so modest that the world never ceased to wonder how it should have happened that one so much praised should have gained so little assurance. He envied no man's success, he sought to detract from no man's merits, but he was acutely sensitive both to praise and to blame—sensitive to such a degree that an unfavorable criticism of any of his works would almost persuade him that they were as worthless as the critic represented them. He thought so little of himself that he could never comprehend why it was that he should be the object of curiosity or reverence.

From the time that he began the composition of his "Sketch-Book," his whole life was the life of an author. His habits of composition were, however, by no means regular. When he was in the vein, the periods would literally stream from his pen; at other times he would scarcely write anything. For two years after the failure of his brothers at Liverpool, he found it almost impossible to write a line. He was throughout life an early riser, and when in the mood, would write all the morning and till late in the day, wholly engrossed with his subject. In the evening he was ready for any cheerful pastime, in which he took part with an animation almost amounting to high spirits. These intervals of excitement and intense labor, sometimes lasting for weeks, were suc-

ceeded by languor, and at times by depression of spirits, and for months the pen would lie untouched; even to answer a letter at these times was an irksome task.

In the evening he wrote but very rarely, knowing—so, at least, I infer—that no habit makes severer demands upon the nervous system than this. It was owing, I doubt not, to this prudent husbanding of his powers, along with his somewhat abstinent habits and the exercise which he took every day, that he was able to preserve unimpaired to so late a period the faculties employed in original composition. He had been a vigorous walker and a fearless rider, and in his declining years he drove out daily, not only for the sake of the open air and motion, but to refresh his mind with the aspect of nature. One of his favorite recreations was listening to music, of which he was an indulgent critic, and he contrived to be pleased and soothed by strains less artfully modulated than fastidious ears are apt to require.

His facility in writing and the charm of his style were owing to very early practice, the reading of good authors and the native elegance of his mind, and not, in my opinion, to any special study of the graces of manner or any anxious care in the use of terms and phrases. Words and combinations of words are sometimes found in his writings to which a fastidious taste might object; but these do not prevent his style from being one of the most agreeable in the whole range of our literature. It is transparent as the light, sweetly modulated, unaffected,

the native expression of a fertile fancy, a benignant temper, and a mind which, delighting in the noble and the beautiful, turned involuntarily away from their opposites. His peculiar humor was, in a great measure, the offspring of this constitution of his mind. This "fanciful playing with common things," as Mr. Dana calls it, is never coarse, never tainted with grossness, and always in harmony with our better sympathies. It not only tinged his writings, but overflowed in his delightful conversation.

I have thus set before you, my friends, with such measure of ability as I possess, a rapid and imperfect sketch of the life, character, and genius of Washington Irving. Other hands will yet give the world a bolder, more vivid, and more exact portraiture. In the meantime, when I consider for how many years he stood before the world as an author, with a still-increasing fame—half a century in this most changeful of centuries—I cannot hesitate to predict for him a deathless renown. Since he began to write, empires have risen and passed away; mighty captains have appeared on the stage of the world, performed their part, and been called to their account; wars have been fought and ended, which have changed the destinies of the human race. New arts have been invented and adopted, and have pushed the old out of use; the household economy of half mankind has undergone a Science has learned a new dialect and forgotten the old; the chemist of 1807 would be a vain babbler among his brethren of the present day, and would in turn become bewildered in the attempt to understand them. Nation utters speech to nation in words that pass from realm to realm with the speed of light. Distant countries have been made neighbors; the Atlantic Ocean has become a narrow frith, and the Old World and the New shake hands across it; the East and the West look in at each other's windows. The new inventions bring new calamities, and men perish in crowds by the recoil of their own devices. War has learned more frightful modes of havoc, and armed himself with deadlier weapons; armies are borne to the battle-field on the wings of the wind, and dashed against each other and destroyed with infinite bloodshed. We grow giddy with this perpetual whirl of strange events, these rapid and ceaseless mutations; the earth seems to reel under our feet, and we turn to those who write like Irving, for some assurance that we are still in the same world into which we were born; we read, and are quieted and consoled. In his pages we see that the language of the heart never becomes obsolete; that Truth and Good and Beauty, the offspring of God, are not subject to the changes which beset the inventions of men. We become satisfied that he whose works were the delight of our fathers, and are still ours, will be read with the same pleasure by those who come after us.

If it were becoming, at this time and in this assembly, to address our departed friend as if in his immediate presence, I would say: "Farewell, thou who hast entered into the rest prepared, from the foundation of the world, for serene and gentle spirits like thine. Farewell, happy in thy life, happy in thy death, happier in the reward to which that death was the assured passage; fortunate in attracting the admiration of the world to thy beautiful writings; still more fortunate in having written nothing which did not tend to promote the reign of magnanimous forbearance and generous sympathies among thy fellowmen. The brightness of that enduring fame which thou hast won on earth is but a shadowy symbol of the glory to which thou art admitted in the world beyond the grave. Thy errand upon earth was an errand of peace and good-will to men, and thou art now in a region where hatred and strife never enter, and where the harmonious activity of those who inhabit it acknowledges no impulse less noble or less pure than that of love."

RECOLLECTIONS OF IRVING.

BY HIS PUBLISHER.



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OU are aware that one of the most interesting reunions of men connected with literary pursuits in England is at the annual dinner of the

"Literary Fund,"—the management of which has been so often dissected of late by Dickens and others. It is a fund for disabled authors; and, like most other British charities, requires to be fed annually by a public dinner. A notable occasion of this kind happened on the 11th of May, 1842. It was at this that I first met Mr. Irving in Eu-The president of the festival was no less than the Queen's young husband, Prince Albert,-his first appearance in that (presidential) capacity. His three speeches were more than respectable, for a prince; they were a positive success. In the course of the evening we had speeches by Hallam and Lord Mahon for the historians; Campbell and Moore for the poets; Talfourd for the dramatists and the bar; Sir Roderick Murchison for the savans; Chevalier Bunsen and Baron Brunow for the diplomatists; G. P. R. James for the novelists; the Bishop of Gloucester; Gally Knight, the antiquary; and a goodly sprinkling of

peers, not famed as authors. Edward Everett was present as American Minister; and Washington Irving (then on his way to Madrid in diplomatic capacity) represented American authors. Such an array of speakers in a single evening is rare indeed, and it was an occasion long to be remembered.

The toasts and speeches were, of course, very precisely arranged beforehand, as etiquette requires, I suppose, being in the presence of "His Royal Highness," yet most of them were animated and characteristic. When "Washington Irving and American Literature" was propounded by the fugleman at the elbow of H. R. H., the cheering was vociferously hearty and cordial, and the interest and curiosity to see and hear Geoffrey Crayon seemed to be intense. His name appeared to touch the finest chords of genial sympathy and good-will. The other famous men of the evening had been listened to with respect and deference, but Mr. Irving's name inspired genuine enthusiasm. We had been listening to the learned Hallam, and the sparkling Moore,—to the classic and fluent author of "Ion," and to the "Bard of Hope,"—to the historic and theologic diplomate from Prussia, and to the stately representative of the Czar. A dozen well-prepared sentiments had been responded to in as many different speeches. "The Mariners of England," "And doth not a meeting like this make amends," had been sung, to the evident satisfaction of the authors of those lyrics—(Campbell, by the way, who was near my seat, had to be "regulated" in his speech by his friend and publisher, Moxon, lest H. R. H. should be scandalized). And now everybody was on tiptoe for the author of "Bracebridge Hall." his speech had been proportioned to the cheers which greeted him, it would have been the longest of the evening. When, therefore, he simply said, in his modest, beseeching manner, "I beg to return you my very sincere thanks," his brevity seemed almost ungracious to those who didn't know that it was physically impossible for him to make a speech. It was vexatious that routine had omitted from the list of speakers Mr. Everett, who was at Irving's side; but, as diplomate, the Prussian and Russian had precedence, and as American author, Irving, of course, was the representative man. An Englishman near me said to his neighbor,—"Brief?" "Yes, but you can tell the gentleman in the very tone of his voice."

In the hat-room I was amused to see "little Tom Moore" in the crowd, appealing, with mock-pathos, to Irving, as the biggest man, to pass his ticket, lest he should be demolished in the crush. They left the hall together to encounter a heavy shower; and Moore, in his "Diary," tells the following further incident:

"The best thing of the evening (as far as I was concerned) occurred after the whole grand show was over. Irving and I came away together, and we had hardly got into the street, when a most pelting shower came on, and cabs and umbrellas were in requisition in all directions. As we were provided with neither, our plight was becom-

ing serious, when a common cad ran up to me, and said, —'Shall I get you a cab, Mr. Moore? Sure, a'n't I the man that patronizes your Melodies?' He then ran off in search of a vehicle, while Irving and I stood close up, like a pair of male caryatides, under the very narrow protection of a hall-door ledge, and thought, at last, that we were quite forgotten by my patron. But he came faithfully back, and while putting me into the cab (without minding at all the trifle I gave him for his trouble), he said confidentially in my ear,—'Now mind, whenever you want a cab, Misthur Moore, just call for Tim Flaherty, and I'm your man.'—Now, this I call fame, and of somewhat more agreeable kind than that of Dante, when the women in the street found him out by the marks of hell-fire on his beard."

When I said that Mr. Irving could not speak in public, I had forgotten that he did once get through with a very nice little speech on such an occasion as that just alluded to. It was at an entertainment given in 1837, at the old City Hotel in New York, by the New York booksellers to American authors. Many of "the Trade" will remember the good things said on that evening, and among them Mr. Irving's speech about Halleck, and about Rogers the poet, as the "friend of American genius." At my request, he afterwards wrote out his remarks, which were printed in the papers of the day. Probably this was his last, if not his best effort in this line; for the Dickens-dinner remarks were not complete.

In 1845, Mr. Irving came to London from his post at Madrid, on a short visit to his friend, Mr. McLane, then American Minister to England. It was my privilege at that time to know him more domestically than before. It was pleasant to have him at my table at "Knickerbocker Cottage." With his permission, a quiet party of four was made up; the others being Dr. Beattie, the friend and biographer of Campbell; Samuel Carter Hall, the littérateur, and editor of the Art Journal; and William Howitt. Irving was much interested in what Dr. Beattie had to tell about Campbell, and especially so in Carter Hall's stories of Moore and his patron, Lord Lansdowne. Moore, at this time, was in ill health and shut up from the world. I need not attempt to quote the conversation. Irving had been somewhat intimate with Moore in former days, and found him doubtless an entertaining and lively companion; but his replies to Hall about the "patronage" of my Lord Lansdowne, etc., indicated pretty clearly that he had no sympathy with the small traits and parasitical tendencies of Moore's character. there was anything specially detestable to Irving and at variance with his very nature, it was that self-seeking deference to wealth and station which was so characteristic of the Irish poet.

I had hinted to one of my guests that Mr. Irving was sometimes caught "napping" even at the dinner-table, so that such an event should not occasion surprise. The conversation proved so interesting that I had almost

claimed a victory, when, lo! a slight lull in the talk disclosed the fact that our respected guest was nodding. I believe it was a habit with him, for many years, thus to take "forty winks" at the dinner-table. Still, the conversation of that evening was a rich treat, and my English friends frequently thanked me afterwards for the opportunity of meeting "the man of all others whom they desired to know."

The term of Mr. Irving's contract with his Philadelphia publishers expired in 1843, and, for five years, his works remained in statu quo, no American publisher appearing to think them of sufficient importance to propose definitely for a new edition. Surprising as this fact appears now, it is actually true that Mr. Irving began to think his works had "rusted out" and were "defunct," for nobody offered to reproduce them. Being, in 1848, again settled in New York, and apparently able to render suitable business attention to the enterprise, I ambitiously proposed an arrangement to publish Irving's Works. My suggestion was made in a brief note, written on the impulse of the moment; but (what was more remarkable) it was promptly accepted without the change of a single figure or a single stipulation. It is sufficient to remark, that the number of volumes since printed of these works (including the later ones) amounts to about eight hundred thousand.

The relations of friendship—I cannot say intimacy—to

which this arrangement admitted me were such as any man might have enjoyed with proud satisfaction. I had always too much earnest respect for Mr. Irving ever to claim familiar intimacy with him. He was a man who would unconsciously and quietly command deferential regard and consideration; for in all his ways and words there was the atmosphere of true refinement. He was emphatically a gentleman, in the best sense of that word. Never forbidding or morose, he was at times (indeed always, when quite well) full of genial humor,—sometimes overflowing with fun. But I need not, here at least, attempt to sum up his characteristics.

That "Sunnyside" home was too inviting to those who were privileged there to allow any proper opportunity for a visit to pass unimproved. Indeed, it became so attractive to strangers and lion-hunters, that some of those whose entrée was quite legitimate and acceptable refrained, especially during the last two years, from adding to the heavy tax which casual visitors began to levy upon the quiet hours of the host. Ten years ago, when Mr. Irving was in his best estate of health and spirits, when his mood was of the sunniest, and Wolfert's Roost was in the spring-time of its charms, it was my fortune to pass a few days there with my wife. Mr. Irving himself drove a snug pair of ponies down to the steamboat to meet us -(for, even then, Thackeray's "one old horse" was not the only resource in the Sunnyside stables). The drive of two miles from Tarrytown to that delicious lane which

leads to the Roost,—who does not know all that, and how charming it is? Five hundred descriptions of the Tappan Zee and the region round about have not exhausted it. The modest cottage, almost buried under the luxuriant Melrose ivy, was then just made what it is,—a picturesque and comfortable retreat for a man of tastes and habits like those of Geoffrey Crayon,—snug and modest, but yet, with all its surroundings, a fit residence for a gentleman who had means to make everything suitable as well as handsome about him. Of this a word anon.

I do not presume to write of the home-details of Sunnyside, further than to say that this delightful visit of three or four days gave us the impression that Mr. Irving's element seemed to be at home, as head of the family. He took us for a stroll over the grounds,—some twenty acres of wood and dell, with babbling brooks,pointing out innumerable trees which he had planted with his own hands, and telling us anecdotes and reminiscences of his early life:—of his being taken in the Mediterranean by pirates; -of his standing on the pier at Messina, in Sicily, and looking at Nelson's fleet sweeping by on its way to the battle of Trafalgar; --- of his failure to see the interior of Milan Cathedral, because it was being decorated for the coronation of the first Napoleon;of his adventures in Rome with Allston, and how near Geoffrey Crayon came to being an artist; -of Talleyrand, and many other celebrities; -and of incidents which seemed to take us back to a former generation. Often at this and subsequent visits I ventured to suggest (not professionally), after some of these reminiscences, "I hope you have taken time to make a note of these;" but the oracle nodded a sort of humorous No. A drive to Sleepy Hollow—Mr. Irving again managing the ponies himself—crowned our visit; and with such a coachman and guide, in such regions, we were not altogether unable to appreciate the excursion.

You are aware that in "Knickerbocker," especially, Mr. Irving made copious revisions and additions, when the new edition was published in 1848. The original edition (1809) was dedicated with mock gravity to the New York Historical Society; and the preface to the revision explains the origin and intent of the work. Probably some of the more literal-minded grandsons of Holland were somewhat unappreciative of the precise scope of the author's genius and the bent of his humor; but if this "veritable history" really elicited any "doubts" or any hostility, at the time, such misapprehension has doubtless been long since removed. It has often been remarked that Diedrich Knickerbocker had really enlisted more practical interest in the early annals of his native State than all other historians together, down to his time. But for him we might never have had an O'Callaghan or a Brodhead.

The "Sketch-Book" also received considerable new matter in the revised edition; and the story, in the preface, of the author's connection with Scott and with Murray added new interest to the volume, which has always been the favorite with the public. You will remember Mr. Bryant's remark about the change in the tone of Mr. Irving's temperament shown in this work as contrasted with Knickerbocker, and the probable cause of this change. Mr. Bryant's very delicate and judicious reference to the fact of Mr. Irving's early engagement was undoubtedly correct. A miniature of a young lady, intellectual, refined, and beautiful, was handed me one day by Mr. Irving, with the request that I would have a slight injury repaired by an artist and a new case made for it, the old one being actually worn out by much use. The painting (on ivory) was exquisitely fine. When I returned it to him in a suitable velvet case, he took it to a quiet corner and looked intently on the face for some minutes, apparently unobserved, his tears falling freely on the glass as he gazed. That this was a miniature of the lady-Miss Hoffman, a sister of Ogden Hoffman-it is not now perhaps indelicate to surmise. It is for a poet to characterize the nature of an attachment so loyal, so fresh, and so fragrant, forty years after death had snatched away the mortal part of the object of affection.

During one of his visits to the city, Mr. Irving suddenly asked if I could give him a bed at my house at Staten Island. I could. So we had a nice chatty evening, and the next morning we took him on a charming drive over the hills of Staten Island. He seemed to

enjoy it highly, for he had not been there, I believe, since he was stationed there in a military capacity, during the War of 1812, as aid of Governor Tompkins. He gave us a humorous account of some of his equestrian performances, and those of the Governor, while on duty at the island; but neither his valor nor the Governor's was tested by any actual contact with the enemy.

In facility of composition, Mr. Irving, I believe, was peculiarly influenced by "moods." When in his usual good health, and the spirit was on him, he wrote very rapidly; but at other times composition was an irksome task, or even an impossible one. Dr. Peters says, he frequently rose from his bed in the night and wrote for hours together. Then again he would not touch his pen for weeks. I believe his most rapidly written work was the one often pronounced his most spirited one, and a model as a biography, the "Life of Goldsmith." Sitting at my desk one day, he was looking at Forster's clever work, which I proposed to reprint. He remarked that it was a favorite theme of his, and he had half a mind to pursue it, and extend into a volume a sketch he had once made for an edition of Goldsmith's Works. I expressed a hope that he would do so, and within sixty days the first sheets of Irving's "Goldsmith" were in the printer's The press (as he says) was "dogging at his heels," for in two or three weeks the volume was published.

Visiting London shortly after the "Life of Mahomet" was prepared for the press, I arranged with Mr. Murray,

on the author's behalf, for an English edition of "Mahomet," "Goldsmith," etc., and took a request from Mr. Irving to his old friend Leslie, that he would make a true sketch of the venerable Diedrich Knickerbocker. Mr. Irving insisted that the great historian of the Manhattoes was not the vulgar old fellow they would keep putting on the omnibuses and ice-carts; but that, though quaint and old-fashioned, he was still of gentle blood. Leslie's sketches, however (he made two), did not hit the mark exactly; Mr. Irving liked Darley's better.

Among the briefer visits to Sunnyside which I had the good-fortune to enjoy was one with the estimable compiler of the "Dictionary of Authors." Mr. Irving's amiable and hospitable nature prompted him always to welcome visitors so kindly, that no one, however dull, and however uncertain his claims, would fail to be pleased with his vis-But when the genial host was in good health and in his best moods, and the visitor had any magnetism in his composition, when he found, in short, a kindred spirit, his talk was of the choicest. Of Sir Walter Scott, especially, he would tell us much that was interesting. Probably no two writers ever appreciated each other more heartily than Scott and Irving. The sterling good sense, and quiet, yet rich humor of Scott, as well as his literary tastes and wonderful fund of legendary lore, would find no more intelligent and discriminating admirer than Irving; while the rollicking fun of the veritable Diedrich and the delicate fancy and pathos of Crayon were doubtless unaffectedly enjoyed by the great Scotsman. I wish I could tell you accurately one-half of the anecdotes which were so pleasantly related during those various brief visits at "the cottage;" but I did not go there to take notes, and it is wicked to spoil good stories by misquotation. One story, however, I may venture to repeat.

You remember how the author of the "Pleasures of Hope" was once hospitably entertained by worthy people, under the supposition that he was the excellent missionary Campbell, just returned from Africa,-and how the massive man of state, Daniel Webster, had repeated occasion, in England, to disclaim honors meant for Noah, the man of words. Mr. Irving told, with great glee, a little story against himself, illustrating these uncertainties of distant fame. Making a small purchase at a shop in England, not long after his second or third work had given currency to his name, he gave his address ("Mr. Irving, Number," etc.,) for the parcel to be sent to The salesman's face brightened: "Is it his lodgings. possible," said he, "that I have the pleasure of serving Mr. Irving?" The question, and the manner of it, indicated profound respect and admiration. A modest and smiling acknowledgment was inevitable. A few more remarks indicated still more deferential interest on the part of the man of tape; and then another question, about Mr. Irving's "latest work," revealed the pleasant

fact that he was addressed as the famous Edward Irving, of the Scotch Church,—the man of divers tongues. The very existence of the "Sketch-Book" was probably unknown to his intelligent admirer. "All I could do," added Mr. Crayon, with that rich twinkle in his eye,— "all I could do was to take my tail between my legs and slink away in the smallest possible compass."

A word more about Mr. Irving's manner of life. impression given by Thackeray, in his notice (genial enough, and well-meant, doubtless) of Irving's death, is absurdly inaccurate. His picture of the "one old horse," the plain little house, etc., would lead one to imagine Mr. Irving a weak, good-natured old man, amiably, but parsimoniously, saving up his pennies for his "eleven nieces," (!) and to this end stinting himself, among other ways, to "a single glass of wine," etc., etc. Mr. Thackeray's notions of style and state and liveried retinues are probably not entirely un-English, notwithstanding he wields so sharp a pen against England's snobs; and he may naturally have looked for more display of greatness at the residence of an ex-ambassador. But he could scarcely appreciate that simple dignity and solid comfort, that unobtrusive fitness, which belonged to Mr. Irving's home-arrangements. There were no flunkies in gold and scarlet; but there were four or five good horses in the stable, and as many suitable carriages. Everything in the cottage was peculiarly and comfortably elegant, without the least pretension. As to the "single glass of wine," Mr. Irving, never a professed teetotaller, was always temperate on instinct both in eating and drinking; and in his last two years I believe he did not taste wine at all. In all financial matters, Mr. Irving's providence and preciseness were worthy of imitation by all professional literary men; but with exactness and punctuality he united a liberal disposition to make a suitable use of money, and to have all around him comfortable and appropriate. Knowing that he could leave a handsome independence for those nearest to him, he had no occasion for any such anxious care as Mr. Thackeray intimates.

Thackeray had been invited to Yonkers, to give his lecture on "Charity and Humor." At this "Ancient Dorp" he was the guest of Cozzens, and I had the honor of accompanying the greater and lesser humorist in a drive to Sunnyside, nine miles. (This call of an hour, by the way, was Thackeray's only glimpse of the place he described.) The interview was in every way interesting. Mr. Irving produced a pair of antiquated spectacles, which had belonged to Washington, and Major Pendennis tried them on with evident reverence. The hour was well filled with rapid, pleasant chat; but no profound analysis of the characteristics of wit and humor was elicited either from the Stout Gentleman or from Vanity Fair. Mr. Irving went down to Yonkers, to hear Thackeray's lecture in the evening, after we had all had a slice of bear at Mr. Sparrowgrass's, to say nothing of sundry

other courses, with a slight thread of conversation between. At the lecture, he was so startled by the eulogistic presentation of the lecturer to the audience, by the excellent chief of the committee, that I believe he did not once nod during the evening. We were, of course, proud to have as our guest for the night such an embodiment of "Charity and Humor" as Mr. Thackeray saw in the front bench before him, but whom he considerately spared from holding up as an illustration of his subject.

Charity, indeed, practical "good-will towards men," was an essential part of Mr. Irving's Christianity, and in this Christian virtue he was sometimes severely tested. Nothing was more irksome to him than to be compelled to endure calls of mere curiosity, or to answer letters either of fulsome eulogy of himself, or asking for his eulogy of the MSS. or new work of the correspondent. Some letters of that kind he probably never did answer. Few had any idea of the fagging task they imposed on the distinguished victim. He would worry and fret over it trebly in anticipation, and the actual task itself was to him probably ten times as irksome as it would be to most Yet it would be curious to know how many letters of suggestion and encouragement he actually did write in reply to solicitations from young authors for his criticism and advice, and his recommendation, or, perhaps, his pecuniary aid. Always disposed to find merit, even where any stray grains of the article lay buried in rubbish, he would amiably say the utmost that could justly be said in favor of "struggling genius." Sometimes his readiness to aid meritorious young authors into profitable publicity was shamefully abused,—as in the case of Maitland, an Englishman, who deliberately forged an absurdly distorted paraphrase of a note of Mr. Irving's, besides other disreputable use of the signature which he had enticed from him in answer to urgent appeals. But these were among the penalties of honorable fame and influence which he might naturally expect to pay. The sunny aspect on the "even tenor of his way" still prevailed; and until the hand of disease reached him in the last year of his life, very few probably enjoyed a more tranquil and unruffled existence.

It became almost a proverb, that Mr. Irving was a nearly solitary instance of a long literary career (half a century) untouched by even a breath of ill-will or jealousy on the part of a brother-author. The annals of the genus irritabile scarcely show a parallel to such a career. The most prominent American contemporary of Mr. Irving in imaginative literature, I suppose, was Fenimore Cooper,—whose genius raised the American name in Europe more effectively even than Irving's, at least on the Continent. Cooper had a right to claim respect and admiration, if not affection, from his countrymen, for his brilliant creations and his solid services to American literature; and he knew it. But, as we all know,—for it was patent,—when he returned from Europe, after sending his "Letter to his Countrymen," and gave us "Home as Found," his recep-

tion was much less marked with warmth and enthusiasm than Mr. Irving's was; and while he professed indifference to all such whims of popular regard, yet he evidently brooded a little over the relative amount of public attention extended to his brother-author. At any rate, he persistently kept aloof from Mr. Irving for many years; and not unfrequently discoursed, in his rather authoritative manner, about the humbuggery of success in this country, as exhibited in some shining instances of popular and official favor. With great admiration for Cooper, whose national services were never recognized as they deserved to be, I trust no injustice is involved in the above suggestion, which I make somewhat presumptuously,—especially as Mr. Irving more than once spoke to me in terms of strong admiration of the works and genius of Cooper, and regretted that the great novelist seemed to cherish some unpleasant feeling towards him. One day, some time af-.ter I had commenced a library edition of Cooper's best works, and while Irving's were in course of publication in companionship, Mr. Irving was sitting at my desk, with his back to the door, when Mr. Cooper came in (a little bustlingly as usual), and stood at the office entrance, talking. Mr. Irving did not turn (for obvious reasons), and Cooper did not see him. Remembering his "Mr. Sharp, Mr. Blunt, -Mr. Blunt, Mr. Sharp," I had acquired caution as to introductions without mutual consent; but with a brief thought of how matters stood (they had not met for several years), and a sort of instinct that

reduced the real difference between the parties to a baseless fabric of misapprehension, I stoutly obeyed the impulse of the moment, and simply said,—"Mr. Cooper, here is Mr. Irving." The latter turned,—Cooper held out his hand cordially, dashed at once into an animated conversation, took a chair, and, to my surprise and delight, the two authors sat for an hour, chatting in their best manner about almost every topic of the day and some of former days. They parted with cordial good wishes, and Mr. Irving afterwards frequently alluded to the incident as being a very great gratification to him. He may have recalled it with new satisfaction, when, not many months afterwards, he sat on the platform at the "Cooper Commemoration," and joined in Bryant's tribute to the genius of the departed novelist.

Mr. Irving was never a systematic collector of books, and his little library at Sunnyside might have disappointed those who would expect to see there rich shelves of choice editions, and a full array of all the favorite authors among whom such a writer would delight to revel. Some rather antiquated tomes in Spanish,—indifferent sets of Calderon and Cervantes, and of some modern French and German authors,—a presentation-set of Cadell's "Waverley," as well as that more recent and elegant emanation from the classic press of Houghton,—a moderate amount of home-tools for the "Life of Washington" (rarer materials were consulted in the town-libraries and at Wash-

ington)—and the remainder of his books were evidently a hap-hazard collection, many coming from the authors, with their respects, and thus sometimes costing the recipient their full (intrinsic) value in writing a letter of acknowledgment.

The little apartment had, nevertheless, become somewhat overcrowded, and a suggestion for a general renovation and pruning seemed to be gladly accepted,—so I went up and passed the night there for that purpose. Mr. Irving, in his easy-chair in the sitting-room, after dinner, was quite content to have me range at large in the library and to let me discard all the "lumber" as I pleased; so I turned out some hundred volumes of unclassic superfluity, and then called him in from his nap to approve or veto my proceedings. As he sat by, while I rapidly reported the candidates for exclusion, and he nodded assent, or as, here and there, he would interpose with "No, no, not that," and an anecdote or reminiscence would come in as a reason against the dismissal of the book in my hand, I could not help suggesting the scene in Don Quixote's library, when the priest and the barber entered upon their scrutiny of its contents. Mr. Irving seemed to be highly amused with this pruning process, and his running commentary on my "estimates of value" in weighing his literary collections was richly entertaining.

Observing that his library-table was somewhat antiquated and inadequate, I persuaded him to let me make him a present of a new one, with the modern conveniences of drawers and snug corners for keeping his stray papers. When I sent him such a one, my stipulation for the return of the old one as a present to me was pleasantly granted. This relic was of no great intrinsic value; but, as he had written on this table many of his later works, including "Mahomet," "Goldsmith," "Wolfert's Roost," and "Washington," I prize it, of course, as one of the most interesting mementos of Sunnyside.

As an illustration of habit, it may be added, that, some time after the new table had been installed, I was sitting with him in the library, when he searched long and fruit-lessly for some paper which had been "so very carefully stowed away in some very safe drawer" that it was not to be found, and the search ended in a sort of half-humorous, half-earnest denunciation of all "modern conveniences;" the simple old table, with its primitive facilities, was, after all, worth a dozen of these elegant contrivances for memory-saving and neatness.

One rather curious characteristic of Mr. Irving was excessive, unaffected modesty and distrust of himself and of his own writings. Considering how many a débutant in letters, not yet out of his teens, is so demonstratively self-confident as to the prospective effect of his genius on an expecting and admiring world, it was always remarkable to hear a veteran, whose fame for half a century had been cosmopolitan, expressing the most timid doubts as to his latest compositions, and fearing they were unequal

to their position,—so unwilling, too, to occupy an inch of ground to which any other writer might properly lay claim. Mr. Irving had planned and made some progress in a work on the Conquest of Mexico, when he learned of Mr. Prescott's intentions, and promptly laid his project His "Life of Washington," originating more than thirty years ago, was repeatedly abandoned, as the successive works of Mr. Sparks, Mr. Paulding, and others, appeared; and though he was subsequently induced to proceed with his long-considered plan of a more dramatic and picturesque narrative from a new point of view, yet he was more than once inclined to put his MSS. into the fire, in the apprehension that the subject had been worn threadbare by the various compilations which were constantly coming out. When he ventured his first volume, the cordial and appreciative reception promptly accorded to it surprised as much as it cheered and pleased him; for though he despised hollow flattery, no young writer was more warmly sensitive than he to all discriminating, competent, and honest applause or criticism. When "Wolfert's Roost" was published (I had to entice the papers of that volume from his drawers, for I doubt whether he would have collected them himself). I saw him affected actually to tears, on reading some of the hearty and well-written personal tributes which that volume called forth. But though every volume was received in this spirit by the press and the public, he was to the last apprehensive of failure, until a reliable verdict

should again reassure him. The very last volume of his works (the fifth of "Washington") was thus timidly permitted to be launched; and I remember well his expression of relief and satisfaction, when he said that Mr. Bancroft, Professor Felton, and Mr. Duyckinck had been the first to assure him the volume was all that it should be. His task on this volume had perhaps extended beyond the period of his robust health,—it had fagged him,—but he had been spared to write every line of it with his own hand, and my own copy is enriched by the autograph of his valedictory.

To refer, however briefly, to Mr. Irving's politics or religion, even if I had intimate knowledge of both (which assuredly I had not), would be, perhaps, to overstep decorous limits. It may, however, properly be mentioned, that, in the face of all inherent probabilities as to his comfortable conservatism, and his earnest instincts in favor of fraternal conciliation and justice (which was as marked a quality in him as in the great man whom he so faithfully portrayed), in spite of all the considerations urged by timid gentlemen of the old school in favor of Fillmore and the status quo, he voted in 1856, as he told me, for In speaking of the candidates then in the field, he said of Fremont, that his comparative youth and inexperience in party-politics were points in his favor; for he thought the condition of the country called for a man of nerve and energy, one in his prime, and unfettered

by party-traditions and bargains for "the spoils." His characterization of a more experienced functionary, who had once served in the State Department, was more severe than I ever heard from him of any other person; and severity from a man of his judicious and kindly impulses had a meaning in it.

Favored once with a quiet Sunday at "the Cottage," of course there was a seat for us all in the family-pew at Christ Church in the village (Tarrytown). Mr. Irving's official station as church-warden was indicated by the ex-ambassador's meek and decorous presentation of the plate for the silver and copper offerings of the parish-At subsequent successive meetings of the General (State) Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church (to which I had been delegated from a little parish on Staten Island), the names of Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper were both recorded,—the latter representing Christ Church, Cooperstown. Mr. Irving for several years served in this capacity, and as one of the Missionary Committee of the Convention. His name was naturally sought as honoring any organization. the last person to be demonstrative or conspicuous either as to his faith or his works; but no disciple of Christ, perhaps, felt more devoutly than he did the reverential aspiration of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Passing a print-window in Broadway one day, his eye rested on the beautiful engraving of "Christus Conso-

lator." He stopped and looked at it intently for some minutes, evidently much affected by the genuine inspiration of the artist in this remarkable representation of the Saviour as the consoler of sorrow-stricken humanity. His tears fell freely. "Pray, get me that print," said he; "I must have it framed for my sitting-room." When he examined it more closely and found the artist's name, "It's by my old friend Ary Scheffer!" said he, remarking further, that he had known Scheffer intimately, and knew him to be a true artist, but had not expected from him anything so excellent as this. I afterwards sent him the companion, "Christus Remunerator;" and the pair remained his daily companions till the day of his To me, the picture of Irving, amid the noise and bustle of noon in Broadway, shedding tears as he studied that little print, so feelingly picturing human sorrow and the source of its alleviation, has always remained associated with the artist and his works. If Irving could enjoy wit and humor and give that enjoyment to others, no other writer of books had a heart more tenderly sensitive than his to the sufferings and ills which flesh is heir to.

Of his later days,—of the calmly received premonitions of that peaceful end of which only the precise moment was uncertain,—of his final departure, so gentle and so fitting,—of that "Washington-Irving-day," so dreamily, blandly still, and almost fragrant, December though it

was, when with those simple and appropriate obsequies his mortal remains were placed by the side of his brothers and sisters in the burial-ground of Sleepy Hollow, while thousands from far and near silently looked for the last time on his genial face and mourned his loss as that of a personal friend and a national benefactor, yet could hardly for his sake desire any more enviable translation from mortality,—of the many beautiful and eloquent tributes of living genius to the life and character and writings of the departed author, -of all these you have already an ample record. I need not repeat or extend it. If you could have "assisted" at the crowning "Commemoration," on his birthday (April 3d), at the Academy of Music, you would have found it in many respects memorably in accordance with the intrinsic fitness of things. An audience of five thousand, so evidently and discriminatingly intelligent, addressed for two hours by Bryant, with all his cool, judicious, deliberate criticism, warmed into glowing appreciation of the most delicate and peculiar beauties of the character and literary services he was to delineate,—and this rich banquet fittingly desserted by the periods of Everett,—such an evening was worthy of the subject, and worthy to be remembered. The heartiness and the genial insight into Irving's best traits which the poet displayed were peculiarly gratifying to the nearer friends and relatives. His sketch and analysis, too, had a remarkable completeness for an address of that kind, while its style and manner were models of chaste elegance. Speaking of Irving's contemporaries and predecessors, he warms into poetry, thus:—

"We had but one novelist before the era of the 'Sketch-Book;' their number is now beyond enumeration by any but a professed catalogue-maker, and many of them are read in every cultivated form of human speech. Those whom we acknowledge as our poetsone of whom is the special favorite of our brothers in language who dwell beyond the sea—appeared in the world of letters and won its attention after Irving had become famous. We have wits and humorists and amusing essayists, authors of some of the airiest and most graceful contributions of the present century, and we owe them to the new impulse given to our literature in I look abroad on these stars of our literary firmament, some crowded together with their minute points of light in a galaxy, some standing apart in glorious constellations; I recognize Arcturus and Orion and Perseus and the glittering jewels of the Southern Crown, and the Pleiades shedding sweet influences; but the Evening Star, the soft and serene light that glowed in their van, the precursor of them all, has sunk below the horizon. The spheres, meanwhile, perform their appointed courses; the same motion which lifted them up to the mid-sky, bears them onward to their setting; and they, too, like their bright leader, must soon be carried by it below the earth."

Let me quote also Mr. Bryant's closing remarks:—

"Other hands will yet give the world a bolder, more vivid, and more exact portraiture. In the meantime, when I consider for how many years he stood before the world as an author, with still increasing fame-half a century in this most changeful of centuries—I cannot hesitate to predict for him a deathless renown. he began to write, empires have arisen and passed away; mighty captains have appeared on the stage of the world, performed their part, and been called to their account; wars have been fought and ended which have changed the destinies of the human race. New arts have been invented and adopted, and have pushed the old out of use; the household economy of half mankind has undergone a revolution. Science has learned a new dialect and forgotten the old; the chemist of 1807 would be a vain babbler among his brethren of the present day, and would in turn become bewildered in the attempt to understand them. Nation utters speech to nation in words that pass from realm to realm with the speed of light. Distant countries have been made neighbors; the Atlantic Ocean has become a narrow frith, and the Old World and the New shake hands across it: the East and the West look in at each other's windows. inventions bring new calamities, and men perish in crowds by the recoil of their own devices. War has learned more frightful modes of havoc, and armed himself with deadlier weapons; armies are borne to the battle-field on the wings of the wind, and dashed against

each other and destroyed with infinite bloodshed. We grow giddy with this perpetual whirl of strange events, these rapid and ceaseless mutations; the earth seems to be reeling under our feet, and we turn to those who write like Irving, for some assurance that we are still in the same world into which we were born; we read, and are quieted and consoled. In his pages we see that the language of the heart never becomes obsolete; that Truth, and Good, and Beauty, the offspring of God, are not subject to the changes which beset the inventions of men. We become satisfied that he whose works were the delight of our fathers, and are still ours, will be read with the same pleasure by those who come after us."

